

SUMMARY ACTION MINUTES

(Action Items Displayed in Italics)

WEDNESDAY, MAY 8, 2024 — 3:00 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL

Chair Fegraus, Vice Chair McCary, and Members Orgill, Clark, Litschi, Osborne, and Felder were present. Members Foley, Maloney, Horne, Conners, and Weiss were absent.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

At this time, members of the public may address the Authority on items of public interest that are within the jurisdiction of the Authority and are not contained in today's agenda.

No comments were received from the public.

III. CONSENT CALENDAR (ITEM(S) A)

The following item on the consent calendar will be approved by one motion unless an Authority Member requests to pull a specific item.

A. APPROVE AUTHORITY MINUTES FOR THE MARCH 13, 2024 MEETING.

Motion to approve the Authority Minutes for the March 13, 2024 Meeting:

Member Orgill

2nd: Member Osborne

Unanimous vote to approve

IV. AUTHORITY MEMBERS AND PARTNERS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

A. LAGUNA CANYON FOUNDATION (LCF) UPDATE

Christie Sweeney, LCF Interim Senior Manager, shared the following activities: educational tours, also with Coastkeepers for grades 2–5 and 7th grade, volunteer activities, restoration projects. Alan Kaufman, Conservation Director noted this is the height of the growing season which leads to fuel modification activities with an initial pass to remove non-natives with mowing, no pesticides with a goal to have at least 50% native plants. In Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park, the Aliso Creek project funded by the Wildlife Conservation Board has identified 17 nests along the creek. Bird species included the Common Yellowthroat, Song Sparrow, California Towhee, Mourning Dove, Bushtit and Allen's Hummingbird.

B. LAGUNA BEACH OPEN SPACE UPDATE

Representative not available to provide an update at this time.

C. NATURAL COMMUNITIES COALITION (NCC) UPDATE

Darin Loughery, NCC Outreach and Engagement Coordinator, shared the following: as a science-based organization for the Natural Communities Conservation Plan/Habitat Conservation Plan California state program has had a

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coastal cactus wren study with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in 2006, 2008, 2013, 2018 and 2023. In 2023, 3,877 acres of cactus resources were mapped, whereas 4,870 acres were mapped in previous years. This change represents a loss of 993 acres (20.4%) of cactus resources in the entire Reserve.

The number of occupied cactus wren sites in the Coastal Reserve over the 17-year span of the study declined from 70 in 2006, to 69 in 2018, to 57 in 2023; No occupied sites were found in twelve planning areas and three other planning areas have only one or two occupied sites. Five planning areas however have consistently been occupied by wrens throughout the history of the study and suggest the cactus wren population is relatively stable in this area. These areas include largely managed access properties in Shady Canyon, Turtle Rock, and San Joaquin Hills (north and south of toll road) and suggest the wren's recovery rate is heightened when you minimize human access to areas with healthy cactus scrub.

On the Central Reserve and in the TNC Easements, there were far fewer cactus wren sites occupied. In 2023, a total of 41 sites were occupied in the 21,000-acre Central Reserve and 17 sites occupied throughout the TNC Easements.

There are still strong nesting area sites, mostly in managed access areas. Laguna Coast Wilderness Park and Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park have shown increased public access during these study periods.

D. IRVINE OPEN SPACE PRESERVE UPDATE

Casey Gnad, City of Irvine Open Space Administrator, shared the following: high level of rain with soil retaining the water complicated trail management and access but was positive for seed growth. The city has hired a second ranger to help with daily coverage for public contact and education. The degree of access to the Irvine Gateway Segment still to be determined. Great Park Wildlife Corridor Phases 1 and 2 complete with Phase 3 in process. The City of Irvine Council has asked for a feasibility study of a public trail in the Veeh Creek section of the city's open space preserve. CGA Member Felder inquired about a June 2023 e-bike talk for the city, resulting in a ban on e-bike use in the preserves. Although the ban was approved, the enforcement is still a work in progress.

E. NEWPORT BEACH OPEN SPACE UPDATE

Representative not available to provide an update at this time.

F. ALISO VIEJO OPEN SPACE UPDATE

Representative not available to provide an update at this time.

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G. LAGUNA NIGUEL OPEN SPACE UPDATE

Jeff Kirby, City of Laguna Niguel Recreation Supervisor, noted the popularity of the trail maps and the city's intention to update them

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Receive and File Agenda Items IV.A–G.

Motion: Vice Chair McCary

2nd: Member Orgill

Unanimous vote to Receive and File Agenda Items IV.A–G

V. OC PARKS STAFF UPDATE

A. PARK OPERATIONS — ALL DEPARTMENTS UPDATE

Ev Mena, OC Parks Parks Division Manager, introduced Derrick Ankerstar, Operations Manager for Laguna Coast Wilderness Park, Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park and Laguna Niguel Regional Park. OC Parks on May 18th will celebrate the opening of the new Red Rock Wilderness located within the Irvine Ranch Open Space dedicated to Orange County by the Irvine Company. The approximately 1,500-acre area features more than 8 miles of managed access trails overseen by the Irvine Ranch Conservancy.

B. LAGUNA COAST WILDERNESS PARK (LCWP) AND ALISO AND WOOD CANYONS WILDERNESS PARK (AWCWP) SPOTLIGHT

1. LCWP Update

Brad Barker, OC Parks Supervising Park Ranger II, shared the following: LCWP received 24" of rain in the '23–'24 rain season, park closure of 45 days due to the rains. The trails were not significantly damaged. Have started the grading and restoration of the 40 miles of trails. Field level maintenance position recently filled by an experienced, certified arborist. Resource Specialist Shelbi Richardson has 6 public programs offered with a variety of activities. Discovery of 2 coastal cactus wrens near the Nix Nature Center with hopes they have a nest nearby. Questions about the park roads we used for the May tour — noted that there are two stages for road repair — first to be able to use them, then final grading after the rainy season.

2. AWCWP Update

Adam Martinez, OC Parks Supervising Park Ranger I, shared the following: AWCWP also had about 24" of rain during the current rainy season. Trails with damage in or near include West Ridge, Mathis, Car Wreck, Cholla. The high vegetation growth is requiring full staff and contractor attention. Laguna Canyon

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Foundation and Coastkeepers are assisting with education and restoration activities. Addition of a new Park Ranger, Nikee Chambers, just out of the Ranger Academy. Question of citations — OC Parks is working with the City of Laguna Beach Park Rangers for coordination in issuing citations, fire training, and help with the homeless.

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Receive and File Agenda Items V.A–B.

Motion: Member Osborne

2nd: Member Orgill

Unanimous vote to Receive and File Agenda Items V.A–B

VI. DISCUSSION CALENDAR (ITEM(S) A–B)

A. LAGUNA CANYON ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT UPDATE

City of Laguna Beach Staff, if available, will share an update on its Laguna Canyon Road Improvement Project following a report presented at the November 15, 2022 City Council Meeting and further planning.

Tom Perez, Assistant Director Public Works, City of Laguna Beach, presented an overview of the Laguna Canyon Road: Protect & Connect project. Note attached presentation document. It was noted by CGA Chair that our view of the project is only related to any impacts on Laguna Coast Wilderness Park. Key project topics include safety from wildfires and access from one side of the road to the other, improvements in existing right of way, rural character of the road, and undergrounding.

The City is currently holding public outreach meetings to discuss the projects and alternatives which will continue through August. The Outreach has included facts from the 2014–2015 Task Force and other reports including the Project Study Report (PSR) approved by Caltrans in 2022. The Project Approval and Environmental Documentation (PAED) was started in May 2023. The Relinquishment of ownership of Laguna Canyon Road was started in January 2024.

CGA Members noted that if the road easements adjacent to the parkland are used as pedestrian and bikeways it will diminish the natural boundary to the parkland. Also that the public could use the LCWP staging areas for parking and then bike or walk into the city. After discussion the CGA members agreed that impacts on LCWP could include impacts of the staging areas (parking), degrading of the wilderness habitat, loss of park facilities during construction time, safety of park users as they enter and exit the two staging areas along the project route and concern that the project does not address wildlife roadkill.

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RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

1. Receive and File.
2. If a report is provided, if appropriate, authorize an Authority Member to prepare a comment letter to the City of Laguna Beach regarding the Laguna Canyon Road Improvement Project and Continue the Item.

Motion: Chair Fegraus

2nd: Vice Chair McCary

Unanimous vote to prepare a letter to the City of Laguna Beach thanking the City for the presentation and a summary of the items of concern that would impact LCWP. The letter also requests inclusion in future decisions about the project that would impact the parkland. The Chair was designated to draft the letter with review by others before distribution.

B. LAGUNA CANYON ROAD WIDENING AND SAFETY PROJECT UPDATE

OC Parks Staff, if available, will share an update on Caltrans' Laguna Canyon Road Widening and Safety Project.

Brian Kurnow, OC Parks Entitlements Division Manager noted that OC Parks continues to attend the weekly meetings, no new information, but OC Parks does have a concern about the containment of the silt.

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Receive and File and Continue the Item.

Motion: Member Felder

2nd: Member Orgill

Unanimous vote to Receive and File

C. LAGUNA COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN STUDENT CENTER DEVELOPMENT

City of Laguna Beach Staff, if available, will provide a report of the proposed developments at the Laguna College of Art and Design Student Center and any possible impacts to AWCWP.

Representative not available to provide an update at this time.

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Receive and File and Continue the Item, if appropriate.

Motion: Chair Fegraus

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2nd: Vice Chair McCary

Unanimous vote to Receive and File and Continue the item

D. IRVINE WILDLIFE CORRIDOR UPDATE

Receive information about the Science Advisors Series, Partner Charter, and other activities.

Member Clark shared information about a recent Wildlife Corridor Tour for City of Irvine Councilmember Treseder and staff. Chair Fegraus also noted that California Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot had the opportunity to visit and learn about the wildlife corridor and is supportive of its completion.

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Receive and File and Continue the Item.

Motion: Member Orgill

2nd: Vice Chair McCary

Unanimous vote to Receive and File and Continue the item

E. HABITAT SUSTAINABILITY AND LCWP TRAIL MAP REVIEW

Authority Members will refer to and discuss sections of LCWP General Development and Resource Management Plans that require updates or amendments and discuss preparation of an addendum to these plans.

Chair Fegraus shared a recent meeting with OC Parks staff regarding the proposed Addendum schedule. CGA will try to have a draft list of items for the GDP and RMP Addendum by the September meeting and a finalized list by the November meeting. A committee will draft Addendum items including those already noted for the CGA's review.

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Receive and File and Continue the Item.

Motion: Vice Chair McCary

2nd: Chair Fegraus

Unanimous vote to Receive and File and Continue the item

VII. AUTHORITY COMMENTS AND REPORT

At this time Authority Members may comment on agenda or non-agenda matters, provided that no action may be taken on off-agenda items unless authorized by law. Members may also suggest items for the May 8, 2024 meeting agenda.

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Question of the status of the City of Laguna Beach consideration of enrolling in the NCCP/HCP program. No new information at this time.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT TO JULY 10, 2024 MEETING 5:01 p.m.

Motion: Member Osborne

2nd: Chair Fegraus

Unanimous vote to adjourn to the July 10, 2024 Meeting.