



Agricultural clearing targeted by California Dept of Fish and Game

In October 2011 the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) San Diego Regional Office took a bold step, DFG submitted comments to the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report for Los Angeles County General Plan and Antelope Valley Area Plan, requesting the County asking the County of Los Angeles to exert regulatory oversight over agricultural clearing of native habitats.

When the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) was enacted in 1970, the agricultural industry lobbied hard to escape the planning and public review processes established by CEQA. In practical terms, agricultural clearing has been interpreted as “not a project” and not subject to CEQA. Even if this exemption is understandable for family farming activities, the intention of the law was never to allow the denuding of thousands of acres of native habitat for sale to developers instead of farming enterprise.

DFG asserts that “the significant, direct, and cumulative losses of important representative elements of the natural heritage and biological diversity of the County, including species listed as threatened and/or endangered... including but not limited to western burrowing owl, American badger, tricolored blackbird, coast horned lizard and special status botanical resources such as Joshua tree woodland, saltbush scrub, and several plant species upon which adverse impacts would be considered significant under a comprehensive CEQA review process. Several of these species are found nowhere else in the County.



status species and jurisdictional waters of the state in order to plan for appropriate avoidance, mitigation measures and regulatory compliance. This blanket exemption of oversight

“The lack of CEQA oversight at the County level for agricultural clearing also frequently results in no biological assessment being required to determine impacts to special

makes it very difficult for the Department to protect public trust resources, contributes to violations of law, and furthers unmitigated loss of biological diversity.”

Examples cited by DFG include clearing at Red Dawn Sun Tower LLC’s property, and Gray Butte Solar Array’s property within Significant Ecological Area (SEA) #55.

Got trails?

Do you care about trails? Please get involved to reinvigorate the trails committee. As our land holdings expand, we need



Photo © 2010 Maderman

volunteers to take the lead in our trails division. This includes meetings and conferences attendance, and helping inform the board to develop trail programs on conserved lands. Please call (661) 943-9000.

Trail Plans under review

Los Angeles County Bicycle Master Plan:

<http://lacountybikeplan.com/>

Lancaster Trails and Bikeways:

<http://www.cityoflancasterca.org/index.aspx?page=920>



A lot is happening in the Angeles National Forest, the largest preserved land in our region.

See pages 4 - 5.

Volunteers clear 50 cubic yards trash from Gerhardy Sanctuary



National Public Lands Day

In recognition of National Public Lands Day, September 24, volunteers removed 50 cubic yards of illegally dumped trash from two sites at Carl O. Gerhardy Wildlife Sanctuary. The Gerhardy Sanctuary is one of a dozen wildlife/wildflower reserves stewarded by the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks, Natural Areas Division.

Despite the rain the night before, drizzles the morning of the cleanup, and a remote location on the far eastern end of Los Angeles County, 30 volunteers showed up to work.

Thank you to everyone who volunteered: Alice, Benjamin, Brana, Charles, Chase, Daniel, David D., David F., David T., George, Ian, James F., James L., Jodi, Joe, John, Ken, Kimberly, Kyle, Melissa, Naomi, Neil, Nicole, Quinn, Rebecca, Robert, Sarai, Wendal, and Wendy.

They came from Antelope Valley Conservancy, Boy Scout Troops 599 and 1625, Antelope Valley Free Thinkers, Soar High School, and more. The cleanup was co-hosted by Los Angeles County Parks and Antelope Valley Conservancy, with sponsorship from Lockheed-Martin and Waste Management.



One young volunteer characterized the dumping as “nasty”. Not only was the trash itself nasty, but it was indeed nasty of people to put it there. It would take the same effort for the dumpers to take the trash to the landfill, and it took us much more time, money, and effort to remove the trash than it would have to take the trash to the landfill in the first place.



Three fiberglass boat shells had been dumped at the sanctuary. “Captain” Chris Mowry, Sanctuary Manager, towed them to a dirt road, and AV Conservancy hired the West Side Equipment Rentals tractor operator to crush and lift the boats into the roll-off.

“Arrrgh, mateys, arrrgh you ready to pick up trash?” And thank you so very much, their answers were a resounding ‘Aye, Captain!’



AV ILLEGAL DUMPING WEB SITE
Report illegal dump sites online
<http://dpw.lacounty.gov/epd/illdump/>

Agricultural clearing targeted by California Dept of Fish and Game

In October 2011 the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) San Diego Regional Office took a bold step, DFG submitted comments to the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report for Los Angeles County General Plan and Antelope Valley Area Plan, requesting the County asking the County of Los Angeles to exert regulatory oversight over agricultural clearing of native habitats.

When the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) was enacted in 1970, the agricultural industry lobbied hard to escape the planning and public review processes established by CEQA. In practical terms, agricultural clearing has been interpreted as “not a project” and not subject to CEQA. Even if this exemption is understandable for family farming activities, the intention of the law was never to allow the denuding of thousands of acres of native habitat for sale to developers instead of farming enterprise.

DFG asserts that “the significant, direct, and cumulative losses of important representative elements of the natural heritage and biological diversity of the County, including species listed as threatened and/or endangered... including but not limited to western burrowing owl, American badger, tricolored blackbird, coast horned lizard and special status botanical resources such as Joshua tree woodland, saltbush scrub, and several plant species upon which adverse impacts would be considered significant under a comprehensive CEQA review process. Several of these species are found nowhere else in the County.



“The lack of CEQA oversight at the County level for agricultural clearing also frequently results in no biological assessment being required to determine impacts

to special status species and jurisdictional waters of the state in order to plan for appropriate avoidance, mitigation measures and regulatory compliance. This blanket exemption of oversight makes it very difficult for the Department to protect public trust resources, contributes to violations of law, and furthers unmitigated loss of biological diversity.”

Examples cited by DFG include clearing at Red Dawn Sun Tower LLC’s property, and Gray Butte Solar Array’s property within Significant Ecological Area (SEA) #55.

Don Davis earns CNPS Rare Plant Hunt Award

Antelope Valley resident Don Davis has earned the California Native Plant Society’s 2011 Grand Prize Rare Plant Treasure Hunt Award for most occurrences updated. Davis also earned 3rd place in the photo competition with this Johnstons monkeyflower (*Mimulus johnstonii*), taken at Devils Punchbowl.



Photo © 2011 Don Davis

Davis documented 42 new and historic rare plant occurrences in the desert and mountains of Southern California, including Shortjoint beavertail cactus (*Opuntia basilaris* var. *brachyclada*), Rock Creek broomrape (*Orobanche valida* ssp. *Valida*), and Peirson’s morning glory (*Calystegia peirsonii*).

The San Gabriel Mountains Chapter took Grand Prize for CNPS chapter with the most occurrences updated and hours logged.

The Rare Plant Treasure Hunt is a new statewide effort teaming experienced botanists team with amateurs to search for new and historic rare plant populations, information that is critical to inform conservation actions and planning efforts.

Davis was recently elected to the board of Antelope Valley Conservancy. The Antelope Valley region, where mountain and marine formations collide with Mojave Desert habitats, offers some of California’s most diverse and unstudied plant communities.

USDA Forest Service warns of loss of forest and buffer lands

An estimated 6,000 acres of open space are lost each day, a rate of four acres per minute. The "Forests on the Edge" project (<http://www.fs.fed.us/openspace>) estimates that 57 million acres of *private forest* lands could experience sizeable increases in housing density by 2030.

Public forests are also affected, including the Angeles National Forest in northern Los Angeles County. Forest and lands immediately adjacent to the forest are being lost daily to homes, energy and transmission, recreation activities, roads, illegal clearing and dumping, and other impacts.

USDA's goal is to "Increase public awareness of the importance of conserving America's private forests and lands located around the nation's national forests and grasslands." According to Susan Stein, "By 2060, the area of land under



urban land cover is projected to increase by over 86 million acres, while the net loss in forest cover will be over 37 million acres." This will follow a century of stable forest acreage (in 1910 there were

754 million acres; in 2007 there were 751 million acres).

The problem, says Stein, is that developed land area has increased at a far higher rate than population growth, with population up 19% for 1982-2000 while developed land area grew 42%. Compounding the problem, especially in eastern and southern states, is the fact that our remaining forests are increasingly fragmented as development and inexorable demographics spread their tentacles. The result is increasing pressure on forest structure, timber, water, at-risk species habitat, and other vital ecosystem services.



Reduce your junk mail at
www.catalogchoice.org

Friends of the Angeles

In 2011, the Angeles National Forest and National Forest Foundation held meetings with stakeholders in each of the Ranger Districts, to explore interest in starting a "Friends of the Angeles" group. The goal of the Friends group would be to facilitate improved communication between the Forest Service, volunteers, and stakeholders, to promote consistent policy across the Districts, to provide greater funding opportunities to existing groups and programs, and to increase education and outreach to Forest users and the regional community.

Each of the three Ranger Districts hosted meetings at which attendees brainstormed the question, "In 50 years, what do you want the Angeles National Forest to look like and why?" The answers were used to create this draft vision statement:

"The Angeles National Forest supports healthy forests and watersheds while supporting recreation that is responsible and accessible. Responsible recreation and active stewardship help communities cultivate an understanding and appreciation of natural and cultural resources. Effective communication and strong working relationships between community groups, the Forest Service, and the public sustain the forest for the benefit of future generations."

Please keep informed of progress, get involved, and comment on this vision statement. Please join the Friends of the Angeles Yahoo Group by sending email to friendsoftheangeles-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

Learn what
Los Angeles County
is doing to keep our
watersheds clean

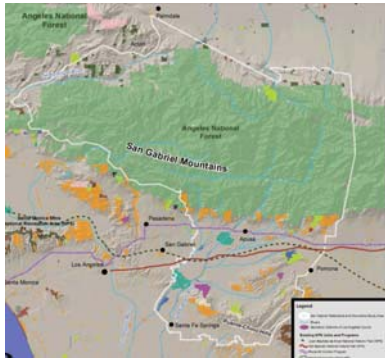


<http://dpw.lacounty.gov/epd/cleanla>



San Gabriel Watershed and Mountains Special Resources Study

Soon the National Park Service will make a recommendation to Congress whether to establish a National Recreation Area in the



San Gabriel Mountains Planning Area, shown in map at left. Stakeholders should review the Draft San Gabriel Watershed and Mountains Special Resources Study and Environmental Assessment. The executive summary, full report, and link to the NPS online public comment system are posted on the web site at:

<http://www.nps.gov/pwro/sangabriel/index.htm>

The Conservancy NEWS



published by

Antelope Valley Conservancy

P.O. Box 3133, Quartz Hill, CA 93586

(661) 943-9000 www.avconservancy.org

Subscription by email is free. Subscription by

US Mail \$25 per year (not tax deductible)

Copyright 2011 Antelope Valley Conservancy

All rights reserved.

Check out

AVC's updated web site

www.avconservancy.org

and ... AVC is on Facebook!

facebook.com/avconservancy



PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK

YES! I want to preserve habitats with my contribution of \$_____

- Please designate my donation to the Dean Webb Endowment.
- Please designate my donation to the Punchbowl Wetlands Endowment.
- Please note my donation in memory of _____
- My employer _____ has a match program.
- Please do not publish my name as a donor, keep confidential.

Please provide newsletter by email (free) no newsletter

I am enclosing \$20 for one year subscription to newsletter by US Mail.

Name: _____

Address (if changed from label): _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email (please print clearly): _____

THANK YOU!

Antelope Valley Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) public benefit corporation.

Tax ID 20-3349581. Credit cards accepted online at avconservancy.org 11/2011