

CREST-DEHESA-GRANITE HILLS-HARBISON CANYON SUBREGIONAL PLANNING GROUP. Minutes of the meeting on 13 June 2022, at Dehesa School, 4612 Dehesa Road, El Cajon.

A. CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Wally Riggs called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

B. ROLL CALL. Planning Group members Rich, Nehring, Wessel, Riggs, Bretz, Manning, Lutz-Partain, Scholl, Page and Lucas were present, forming a quorum of 10. Members Ulm and Becker were absent, but excused. Seat 4, Seat 13 and Seat 14 are vacant.

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES. Member Darin Wessel moved that the Planning Group approves the minutes of its meeting on 9 May 2022 as submitted by Secretary Bretz. The motion passed (10 yes; 0 no; 0 abstain).

E. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION. No members of the Public, or of the Planning Group, requested to speak.

F. ACTION ITEMS.

F1. Presentation by County Staff on Sycuan/Sloane Canyon Trail. Chairman Riggs introduced staff from the County Department of Parks and Recreation, inviting them to give their presentation to inform the Planning Group about the status of planning, and progress towards implementation, of the Sycuan/Sloane Canyon Trail project. They provided a handout to members of the Planning Group and public, showing aerial photographs superimposed with relevant features of the proposed improvements for Trail Segment 1 and Trail Segment 2; and they referred to a large poster with these aerial photographs during their presentation of the project status.

They explained that the County and Sycuan Band had reached agreement for an alignment for Segment 1, with a final approval locating the Trail within the tree zone along the south side of Dehesa Road from Sloane Canyon Road going westerly to the west boundary of the Sycuan Band's (and former sand mining) property, at which point Trail Segment 1 ends. (From there the Trail will cross Dehesa Road and tie into Trail Segment 6B, for which there is not yet an approved alignment with trail features, but which is proposed to continue west on the north side of Dehesa Road to the intersection with Willow Glen Road.) The funds for conducting Segment 1 project design and environmental documentation are in hand; establishing funding for construction of Segment 1 will occur in 2023, anticipating implementation work to begin in Fiscal Year 24/25.

Trail Segment 2 begins at the east end of Segment 1, by the existing parking area on Sycuan Band's property on the east side of Sloane Canyon Road; it will follow the east side of the road towards the south, and will cross the Sweetwater River on a pedestrian/equestrian bridge to a point where it will cross the road to its westerly side, and will continue along the west side of the road to the end of Segment 2, at a point about

0.75 miles from Dehesa Road (where an unmaintained former equipment road which connects to San Diego National Wildlife Refuge property intersects with Sloane Canyon Road). The County has approved the construction documents for Segment 2; and the required application to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) for its final approval of the Segment 2 project should be completed following environmental studies to be conducted in Summer 2022. The funds are in hand for Segment 2 construction, which can begin after the BIA approval, likely in 2023.

Planning Group members, and members of the public, asked questions and discussed concerns about the equestrian/pedestrian bridge planned for Segment 2; about proposed plans for the Trail crossings of Dehesa Road at the west end of Segment 1, and at the west end of Segment 6B; about planning for equestrian staging areas and parking areas for Trail users; about the status and availability of environmental documents for these Trail segments; and about the funding budget for the Project.

Ron Nehring emphasized that adequate information for casual users must be provided by appropriate signage, at trailheads and along public trails. Pat Riggs informed the Group that the Dehesa Valley Community Council approved its funding of an information kiosk for providing information about the Sycuan/Sloane Canyon Trail, if the Sycuan Band will approve locating it at the parking area on its property by Sloane Canyon Road. Other persons emphasized that the design of the proposed bridge for Segment 2, and the Dehesa Road crossings for Segment 1 and Segment 6B, must provide safe/secure surfaces for horses; and that the Dehesa Road crossings must include adequate red warning lights to stop traffic for the safety of Trail users.

F2. Discussion and action on closure of California Riding and Hiking Trail in Sloane Canyon / Beaver Hollow Road (Wessel). Planning Group member Darin Wessel confirmed that the State of California holds legal easements for the public Riding and Hiking Trail located along Beaver Hollow Road, going south towards Jamul from Sloane Canyon Road; and that County plans and maps include it as a dedicated Trail in the Crest-Dehesa-Granite Hills-Harbison Canyon Subregion. He described this Trail as an important community asset that needs protecting and preserving for public use; that it needs to be kept open for public access; and that a solution to resolve its current closure needs to be considered in discussions with the property owners who object to it.

Two property owners, who locked the gate that was historically established and used for public equestrian and pedestrian access to the Trail, spoke to the Planning Group to explain their concerns about, and objections to, its presence across their properties. They challenged the legality of the public easements for the Trail along Beaver Hollow Road through their properties; they described instances of trespass, vehicle gate destruction, property theft and vandalism, which they associated with the existence of the Trail; and they expressed concerns about the potential risk and safety for users of the Trail, alleging it is in a poorly maintained and dangerous condition.

Darin Wessel explained that a thorough, adequate property title search would have informed them about the legal Trail easements through the properties they purchased; he assured them that, as owners of property which includes a public Trail easement, they are provided with strong immunity that protects them from liability for any risks and problems associated with the Trail and its use by the public; but he cautioned them that

they could be found liable for activities on their property, such as target shooting, that harmed public users of the Trail.

Alex Stahl, California Riding and Hiking Trail specialist for the State Department of Parks and Recreation, stated that DPR has the goal of keeping the Trail easement open for public access; she offered to meet and consult with the property owners to address their concerns about Trail maintenance, and to consider possible realignments of the Trail easement location through their properties. She also requested the Planning Group to provide her a letter about its understanding of the issues of concern about this Trail segment along Beaver Hollow Road.

F3. Signage of trail between Mountain View and Horsemill Road in Crest (Ulm).

Planning Group member Pat Ulm was unable to report on this issue, due to an excused absence.

F4. Ad Hoc Committee update regarding evacuation in case of wildfire (Nehring).

Planning Group member Ron Nehring reported that the next meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee will be in Crest, on 14 June at 2:00 PM, and will include representatives from the County, CALFire, San Miguel Fire District and others; and that Planning Group member Tim Lucas will provide a report about it at the July meeting of the Planning Group.

Planning Group discussion raised the question of whether a private road, designated as a fire access road, can be recognized as a public road during an emergency situation; and an answer about this from the County Fire Authority was requested.

Ron Nehring commented that Suncrest Road, an existing private road, can potentially be used in the event of fire, if it is needed for public evacuation; that San Diego Gas and Electric is considering a possible repair for the existing dangerous culvert situation on this road, in order to make it available for safe emergency use; and that clear, unambiguous community street signage must be created, as well as an appropriate community education program, to eliminate confusion for the public attempting to access and use it (even in the night time dark) for evacuation in the event of a fire.

F5. Privately owned busses on Mountain View Road. All three busses have been removed.

G. GROUP BUSINESS.

G1. Report on South Lane Park and Nancy Jane Park pest control issues. There is not yet any specific information from County Parks and Recreation concerning ongoing or planned pest control at South Lane Park and Nancy Jane Park; and someone upset about possible pesticide use at Nancy Jane Park has posted comment on Facebook. Planning Group member Tim Lucas described the high number of gopher mounds in Nancy Jane Park, and he emphasized that this is a proven hazard and safety issue that County DPR needs to address.

H. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE.

Reminder: Even numbered seat filing dates are from 18 July through 12 August 2022.

The next meeting of the Planning Group is scheduled on 11 July 2022 at Dehesa School, 4612 Dehesa Road, El Cajon, beginning at 6:30 PM.

I. ADJOURNMENT. Member Darin Wessel moved adjournment at 8:05 PM. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted, William Bretz (Secretary)