

## Why Are the Preserve Hours Changing?

**Short answer:** *Mainly to protect the natural resources*

**Long answer:**

### *To Support the Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority's (Habitat Authority's) Mission*

The Habitat Authority's mission:

*The Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority is dedicated to the acquisition, restoration, and management of open space in the Puente Hills for preservation of the land in perpetuity, with the primary purpose to protect the biological diversity. Additionally, the agency will endeavor to provide opportunities for outdoor education and low-impact recreation.*

The Habitat Authority's mission gives priority to the protection of biological diversity. The intent of the Habitat Authority is, in part, to continually monitor and manage the trails in order to balance recreation with the health of the ecosystem.

### ***Visitation Increase***

The visitation to the 3,870 acre Puente Hills Preserve (Preserve), has increased substantially. In 2005, the first user survey at the trailheads Preserve-wide found that the daily visitation count was 228.<sup>1</sup> In 2016, the daily visitation jumped dramatically to 2,600.<sup>2</sup> This increase in use can impact the natural resources as explained below.

### ***To Protect the Quality of Biological Resources***

#### Biodiversity

The Preserve is rich in biodiversity and supports a variety of native habitats and species, including sensitive, rare and federally listed species. The coastal California gnatcatcher, a federally threatened species, has been repeatedly documented in the Preserve, as well as the coastal cactus wren, a sensitive species.<sup>3</sup> The Preserve supports various groups of habitat such as coastal sage scrub, chaparral, oak and walnut woodlands, and riparian vegetation. Also, it has representative species from all trophic levels including four amphibians, nine reptiles, 124 birds, and 30 mammals. The Preserve is a fully functioning ecosystem.<sup>4</sup>

#### Wildlife disturbance after dark

The Preserve is home to a wide range of diurnal, crepuscular and nocturnal animals. Crepuscular animals are most active at dawn and dusk. During this small window of time, crepuscular animals must feed, find mates, seek shelter, etc. and many species are only active during the crepuscular and/or nocturnal hours. With the continual added pressure due to increased visitor activity during the day, it becomes more important to provide relief to wildlife during crepuscular (dawn/dusk) and nocturnal times. Enforcement activities by rangers have tried to

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<sup>1</sup> [USC User Survey Report](#), completed in 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Extrapolated from a 3-day visitor count survey in 2016. Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority, [Supplemental 2016 Recreation Use Assessment](#).

<sup>3</sup> [Cooper Ecological Monitoring 2009](#), Page 9.

<sup>4</sup> Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority's [Resource Management Plan](#).

address the ongoing and most consuming challenge of closing the Preserve at sunset. Nightly trailhead gate closures take a significant portion of the rangers' time, and the vast majority of all ranger contacts with visitors pertain to enforcing Preserve hours at closing time.

#### User Created Trails, Trail Widening/Trail Erosion

Illegal trails and widening of trails contributes to habitat loss/fragmentation decreasing the quality and functionality of the habitat. According to the Habitat Authority's trail evaluation in 2016, there were 3 additional miles of illegal trails compared to when the trails were first surveyed in 2002 in the Hellman Park and Turnbull Canyon areas.<sup>5</sup> Trail widths in Hellman Park and Turnbull Canyon areas had expanded one to 11 feet.

#### ***To Protect the Quality of Recreation***

In some instances the dramatic increase in visitation has negatively impacted the Preserve's recreational quality with potential user conflicts, parking and traffic congestion, and the feeling of being crowded.<sup>6</sup> Also, depreciative behaviors such as graffiti, vandalism, litter, dog waste, dumping, and crime have become increasingly challenging to manage given limited resources.

#### ***To Reduce Confusion of Hours***

There has been constant confusion by the public about what defines sunrise/sunset, and understandably many people are too busy with their daily lives to track the daily changing times. "Set times", such as 9am to 6pm, are easier to describe, understand and enforce. Other park agencies use a similar set time hours system.<sup>7</sup>

#### **NEW PRESERVE HOURS:**

**Beginning Monday, September 18, 2017**  
**9am to 6pm (June – September) &**  
**9am to 5pm (October – May)**

Applies to Sycamore Canyon, Hacienda Hills and Turnbull Canyon trail access points. (Already in effect at Hellman Park). Violators subject to \$175 to \$1,000 citation.

*Do we go into libraries or city halls before or after hours? No, we respect the rules. Thank you for doing the same with our wildlands.*

<sup>5</sup> 2016 trails evaluation conducted by Habitat Authority consultant, Placeworks. Other areas had similar impacts.

<sup>6</sup> Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority, [Supplemental 2016 Recreation Use Assessment](#), page 18.

<sup>7</sup> For further detailed information on the topic of changing hours please see <http://www.habitatauthority.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/10-27-16-Management-Plan-staff-report-and-exhibits-signed-small.pdf>