

**PUENTE HILLS HABITAT PRESERVATION AUTHORITY
CITIZENS TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
*Endowment Provided by the Puente Hills Landfill***

September 14, 2021, Tuesday, 7 p.m.

LOCATION:

To be held via video (Zoom) and telephonically by joining at this address:

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81102558666>

Meeting ID: 811 0255 8666

- Or -

Phone: Dial by your location, +1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose), +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma), Meeting ID: 811 0255 8666,

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81102558666>

Charles Lawrence, Chair	Whittier
Shelley Andros	Whittier
Ray Wong	Whittier
Roy Francis, Vice Chair	La Habra Heights
Catherine Houwen	La Habra Heights
Adam Nazaroff	La Habra Heights
Karen Chang	County of Los Angeles
John Houser	County of Los Angeles
Gina Natoli	County of Los Angeles

This meeting is being held pursuant to Section 3 of Executive Order N-29-20 issued by California Governor Gavin Newsom on March 17, 2020. Any or all Committee Members may attend and participate by teleconference meeting. Consistent with mandates of Executive Order No. N-29-20, a physical location from which members of the public may observe the meeting or offer public comment will not be made available, however viewing and public comment options are provided above.

Members of the public may provide electronic comments by Monday, September 13, 2021, by 4:00 p.m. before the public comment section of the meeting to mmiller@HabitatAuthority.org. Please label the email in the subject heading as "Public Comments."

Pursuant to Section 54954 of the Government Code, the Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority (Authority) will hold a regular meeting of the Citizens Technical Advisory Committee (CTAC) at the above time and location for the purpose of:

AGENDA

- I. Call to order.
- II. Roll call.
- III. Public comments.

- IV. Approval of Minutes for the August 24, 2021, Adjourned Regular Meeting.

- V. Standing Reports:
 - a) Report from social media subcommittee.
 - b) Committee Member feedback from the public as it relates to the Habitat Authority.

- VI. Discussion, receive and file June and July 2021 Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) Ranger Reports.
- VII. Presentation, receive and file status update regarding ongoing Authority camera study that investigates wildlife and recreational use patterns across the Habitat Authority's Preserve.
- VIII. Discussion and possible recommendation to Board of Directors regarding approving updates to the Authority Fiscal Policy in regard to Bank Accounts.
- IX. Discussion regarding conducting Authority meetings in-person, virtually, or a hybrid of the two; update on status of Executive Order No. 29-20, updated Executive Orders, pending legislation.
- X. Discussion, Committee members' statements, Executive Director's comments, responses or questions.
- XI. Adjournment and announcement of next meeting.

The Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority is a public entity established pursuant to the Joint Exercise of Powers Act by agreement between the City of Whittier, Los Angeles County, and Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County. Regular meetings of the Citizens Technical Advisory Committee are scheduled for the Tuesday before the third Thursday of every month. NOTE: 72 hours prior to Citizens Technical Advisory Committee meetings, the entire Citizens Technical Advisory Committee agenda package is available for review, along with any meeting-related writings or documents provided to a majority of the Committee members after distribution of the agenda package, at the Authority's website, www.habitatauthority.org. Questions about any agenda item can be addressed to Andrea Gullo, Executive Director, 562.945.9003. NOTE: Members of the public may address the Committee on any item shown on the agenda. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, if you require a disability related modification or accommodation to attend or participate in this meeting, including auxiliary aids or services, please call Melissa Miller at the Habitat Authority office 562.945.9003, at least 48 hours prior to this meeting.

DRAFT Minutes
PUENTE HILLS HABITAT PRESERVATION AUTHORITY
CITIZENS TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
August 24, 2021

The adjourned regular meeting of the Citizens Technical Advisory Committee was held on Tuesday, August 24, 2021, via video and telephonically.

I. CALL TO ORDER.

The Chair, Charles Lawrence, called the meeting to order at approximately 7:01 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL.

A roll call was taken, and there was a quorum at this time.

Members Present:	Shelley Andros	Whittier
	Charles Lawrence, Chair	Whittier
	Ray Wong	Whittier
	Gina Natoli	County of Los Angeles
	John Houser	County of Los Angeles
	Catherine Houwen	La Habra Heights
	Roy Francis, Vice Chair	La Habra Heights
	Adam Nazaroff	La Habra Heights

Members Absent: Karen Chang County of Los Angeles

Authority Representatives Present:

Andrea Gullo, Executive Director
Michelle Mariscal, Ecologist
Melissa Miller, Administrative Assistant
Kenn Hughes, Deputy Chief Ranger, Mountains Recreation
and Conservation Authority (MRCA)
Blair Aas, Director of Planning Services, SCI Consulting
Group

Members of the

Public Present: Steve Huber, Whittier Audubon

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS.

Steve Huber of Whittier Audubon reported that their group is working to resume their monthly walks at Sycamore Canyon, planning to start on Saturday, September 11, at 7:00 a.m.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE JULY 13, 2021, REGULAR MEETING.

Member Houwen motioned to approve these minutes as drafted. Vice Chair Francis seconded this motion, and in a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

V. STANDING REPORTS:

a. REPORT BY BOARD LIAISON ON JULY 15, 2021, AND AUGUST 5, 2021, AUTHORITY BOARD MEETINGS.

Regarding the Board's August 19, 2021, meeting, Executive Director Gullo reported that:

- the Board received a presentation from SCI Consulting Group,
- the Board received and filed the end-of-the-fiscal-year update regarding the Authority's activities,
- the Board approved the draft comment letter regarding the City of Whittier's Draft General Plan Update and Housing Element for 2021-2029 with the removal of the words "minimize or" from the letter's list items # 11 and # 14,
- the Board authorized a non-bid contract with Nakae and Associates in the amount of \$14,350 for invasive species removal,
- the Board authorized entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with Conservation Corp of Long Beach to perform fuel reduction activities as directed by the Authority, and
- there was nothing to report out of the Board's closed session.

b. REPORT FROM SOCIAL MEDIA SUBCOMMITTEE.

Member Andros reported that there have been fewer postings recently but the Authority's Twitter and Facebook are still receiving much positive feedback, especially in response to photos from the ongoing trail camera study.

c. COMMITTEE MEMBER FEEDBACK FROM THE PUBLIC AS IT RELATES TO THE HABITAT AUTHORITY.

There was nothing to report for this item.

VI. PRESENTATION BY AUTHORITY CONSULTANT SCI CONSULTING GROUP AND DISCUSSION REGARDING PROCESS OF EXPLORING FEASIBILITY

OF A FINANCING MECHANISM IN PART FOR WILDFIRE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF AGENCY PROPERTIES.

Executive Director Gullo introduced Blair Aas of SCI, who provided a brief presentation describing the steps and schedule involved in the surveying and evaluation process. Chair Lawrence thanked him for this information.

VII. DISCUSSION, RECEIVE AND FILE FOURTH QUARTERLY 2021 MOUNTAINS RECREATION AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY (MRCA) RANGER REPORT AND ASSOCIATED MULTI-YEAR REPORT.

Executive Director Gullo reviewed this item as presented in the staff report, and there was little discussion. Deputy Chief Ranger Hughes provided additional information. The Committee received and filed these reports.

VIII. PRESENTATION, RECEIVE AND FILE END-OF-THE-FISCAL-YEAR 2020-21 AUTHORITY ACTIVITY UPDATE.

Executive Director Gullo and Ecologist Mariscal reviewed this item as presented in the staff report, and provided a brief PowerPoint presentation regarding further details of interpretation, restoration, and administration activities. The Committee received and filed this update.

IX. DISCUSSION AND UPDATE REGARDING AUTHORITY COMMENTS ON DRAFT CITY-WIDE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE AND HOUSING ELEMENT (2021-2029) UPDATE FOR THE CITY OF WHITTIER, SCH # 2021040762, AND ASSOCIATED DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT.

Ecologist Mariscal briefly reviewed this item, noting that the Board approved this draft letter with the changes of removing the words “minimize or” from both items # 11 and # 14 of the letter’s list of comments/requests. The Committee received and filed this update.

X. DISCUSSION AND UPDATE REGARDING CONTRACT WITH NAKAE AND ASSOCIATES IN THE AMOUNT OF \$14,350 FOR INVASIVE SPECIES REMOVAL ON AUTHORITY MANAGED PROPERTY IN WHITTIER KNOWN AS THE CHEVRON PROPERTY, TO BE FUNDED BY THE AUTHORITY GRANT AGREEMENT WITH THE SAN GABRIEL AND LOWER LOS ANGELES RIVER AND MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY (RMC20008).

Ecologist Mariscal briefly reviewed this item, noting the Board’s approval of this contract at its last meeting, and Member Natoli asked this the amount of vegetation to be removed will affect the movements of any wildlife in the corridor. Ecologist Mariscal answered that the removals will be mostly saplings and are

not in areas known for use by traveling wildlife. The Committee received and filed this update.

XI. DISCUSSION AND UPDATE REGARDING MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH CONSERVATION CORPS OF LONG BEACH TO PERFORM FUEL REDUCTION ACTIVITIES AS DIRECTED BY AUTHORITY.

Executive Director Gullo reported that the Conservation Corps of Long Beach approached the Authority to offer its services for several weeks at no cost in both this fiscal year and next, and that the Board approved entering into this Memorandum of Understanding. The Committee received and filed this update.

XII. DISCUSSION, COMMITTEE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS, RESPONSES OR QUESTIONS.

Vice Chair Francis asked about the new gate at the end of Punta Del Este Drive in Hacienda Heights, and Executive Director Gullo described Los Angeles County's intention that this will inhibit nighttime illegal access there to the County's Schabarum Trail.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING.

Before adjournment, Member Natoli asked if the next meeting should be rescheduled due to that date also being election day, when some Committee members might still be working at the four-day poll locations. A verbal poll of the Committee members was taken regarding the possibility of Wednesday, September 15, for the next meeting date, but at least two members will not be able to attend on that Wednesday, so the regular September 14, 2021 date was determined to be when the next anticipated meeting will be held.

There being no further comments, or business to be discussed, Chair Lawrence adjourned the meeting at 8:36 p.m.



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
Franklin Canyon Park
2600 Franklin Canyon Drive
Beverly Hills, California 90210
Phone (310) 858-7272 Fax (310) 858-7212

July 31, 2021

**Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority
Ranger Services Activities for June and July 2021**

- Continued general patrol for: providing visitor information, identifying hazardous conditions and correcting illegal activity.
- Continued general maintenance for: graffiti removal, vandalism repair, litter and dumping removal, fence and gate repairs, sign installations and repairs and trail maintenance.
- Provided extra patrol for July 4th. Coordinated with Whittier Police, L.A. County Sheriff and L.A., County Fire. Met with La Habra Heights Fire and La Habra Heights Fire Watch. Posted several Habitat Authority volunteers at critical locations to prevent entry to the Preserve and watch for illegal fireworks.
- Ranger vehicles were fitted with water tanks and fire apparatus prior to July 4th.
- Attended the Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority (Habitat Authority) Board meeting and the Citizens Technical Advisory Committee meeting.
- Participated in our ranger monthly management meeting.
- Attended Habitat Authority volunteer meeting.
- Participated in the Hacienda Heights Improvement Association monthly meeting.
- Monitoring all fuel modification efforts in Whittier, La Habra Heights and Hacienda Heights. Working with City and County officials and contractors. All clearance was completed.
- Participated in meeting with Executive Director Andrea Gullo and City of La Habra Heights officials at the Diaz property regarding the Heli-hydrant.
- Continue to conduct perimeter patrols of all property for fence damage, illegal access points, rope swings, and encroachments.

- Continue to notify the Habitat Authority staff of all unsuccessful animal road crossings that are observed at or near Habitat Authority property. During the month of July the following animal was observed.
 - Deer on Hacienda Road/West Road.
- Provided early morning patrol at Hacienda Heights for early hikers prior to opening.
- A man with a rifle was seen in Powder Canyon on the wildlife cameras. The rangers patrolled several days at the times he was seen on the camera. A man matching the description was seen but without a rifle. He was issued a parking citation. Information was given to L.A. County Sheriff, they went to his house and made contact with him, they saw a rifle in the back of his car. The rifle was a pellet gun. He was warned and advised.
- Continue to monitor the Harbor underpass with no illegal activity to report.
- Adjusted the gate at Hellman Park to only allow pedestrians. Installed new signs indicating no vehicle parking. Installed new outhouse.
- Continue to pick up dog defecation at all of the trailheads.
- Repaired the fence at Hellman Park.
- Continue to patrol the SCE, Brea 57 site and Monterey mitigation sites in Powder Canyon and the Olinda site in Arroyo San Miguel.
- Helped disassemble Habitat Authority office furniture and made room in the Sycamore barn to store it.
- Escorted homeless out of Hacienda Hills Trailhead at closing. Spoke to homeless sleeping along Turnbull Canyon Road. Searched for homeless at Hellman Park. The homeless were offered information for services.
- Due to safety concerns and overcrowding at the Turnbull Canyon entrance this summer we worked with the owner of the property and Whittier Police Dept. to secure the vacant lot that is next to the entrance. We had to re-secure the chain once in June and twice in July.
- Monitoring the surveillance cameras at various trailheads in attempt to catch the vehicle break-in perpetrators. We are also coordinating with Whittier Police and L.A. County Sheriff.

- Continue to contact the Los Angeles County Department of Street Maintenance regarding the graffiti along Turnbull Canyon Road.
- Picked up dumping including:
 - Sofas in Powder Canyon.
 - Children's electric quad on Fullerton Road.
- Continue to check and re-post trail closure signs and rope-fence at unauthorized trails and restoration areas in Turnbull Canyon, Worsham Canyon, Powder Canyon and Hellman Park.
- Received several calls during the months of June and July to our 24-hour ranger emergency services number including:
 - Several calls for hikers locked in Hellman Park.
 - Several calls inquiring about Preserve hours.
 - Spectrum needed access to Arroyo San Miguel.
 - Locked in Arroyo Pescadero.
 - Inquiring if dogs are allowed.
 - Reporting people inhaling nitrous oxide in Turnbull Canyon.
 - Hikers locked in at the end of Orange Grove Ave.
 - Trucks are illegally parked at Hacienda Hills Trailhead.
 - Hikers are in the Preserve before it opens at Hacienda Hills.
 - Caller concerned about the fire danger of grass in the hills.
 - Reporting a hawk on the ground at Murphy Ranch Park.
 - Reporting adult son might be lost in Turnbull Canyon. Searched the area, unable to locate.
 - Reporting a suspicious car in Powder Canyon.
 - Whittier Police inquiring about fireworks.
 - Two men drinking and smoking on Coyote Trail.
 - Hikers with backpacks entering the Skyline trail after hours.
 - Reporting Illegal fireworks at Punta Del Este on July 4th. Sheriff and Fire were already at that location preventing access to the hills. No fireworks were observed.
 - Vehicle broken into at Powder Canyon.
 - Reporting dumping on Fullerton Road.
 - Whittier Police reporting banging noise in the hills above Orange Drive.
 - Whittier Police reporting shots fired in Turnbull Canyon.
 - L.A. County Fire wanted to go over maps with us.
 - Caller wanted to use a metal detector in Sycamore Canyon.
 - Reporting a snake in their yard in Whittier.
- Helped lost hiker back to their vehicle in Powder Canyon.

- Dealt with various violations including:
 - In the Preserve after hours at Hacienda Heights, Powder Cyn. and Arroyo Pescadero.
 - Parking violations at Powder Canyon, Arroyo Pescadero, Hacienda Hills Trailhead, Sycamore Canyon and Ford property.
 - Abandoned vehicle on Turnbull Canyon.
 - Loud music in Turnbull Canyon, Powder Canyon, Arroyo Pescadero and Hacienda Hills.
 - Marijuana in Hellman Park.
 - Alcohol in Hellman Park and Turnbull Canyon.
 - Inhaling nitrous oxide gas on Turnbull Canyon.
 - Warn and advise electric bikes in Powder Canyon.
 - Dogs in Sycamore Canyon.
 - Dogs off leash at Turnbull Canyon, Hacienda Hills, Arroyo Pescadero and Powder Canyon.
 - Bikes in Arroyo Pescadero and Sycamore Canyon.

- Continue to work closely with Executive Director Andrea Gullo on various projects and assignments as requested.

If you have any questions, or would like any additional information, please feel free to contact me anytime. Thank you.

Sincerely,

K E Hughes

Kenn Hughes
Deputy Chief Ranger

MEMORANDUM

Meeting Date: September 14, 2021

To: Citizens Technical Advisory Committee

Prepared by: Michelle Mariscal, Ecologist
Through: Andrea Gullo, Executive Director

Agenda Item: **VII. Presentation, receive and file status update regarding ongoing Authority camera study that investigates wildlife and recreational use patterns across the Habitat Authority's Preserve.**

Background:

Nine infrared motion-activated trail cameras were deployed across the Preserve between late December 2019 and early January 2020 to investigate the relationship between wildlife and recreational use patterns. An update and summary of the data collected through June 2020 were presented to the Committee at its December 2020 meeting. The following is an update for data collected between January and December 2020.

The 2020 study expands upon the camera study conducted in 2018 by including five additional camera locations that had been previously studied in 2012-2013. To decrease variation between months and between cameras, the 2020 study aimed to extend the duration of sampling to one calendar year and analyze all images collected rather than only those collected the first three days of each month as was done in 2018 and 2012-2013.

On March 23, 2020, following Los Angeles County Health Officer Orders in response to health and safety concerns surrounding the emerging novel Covid-19 pandemic, the Preserve was temporarily closed and subsequently reopened upon Board action on May 8, 2020. That unexpected closure has provided a unique opportunity to observe wildlife responses in the absence of recreational use in areas of the Preserve where human presence is usually relatively high. For that reason, the camera study was extended an additional year through 2021 for comparative purposes. Given the large amount of data collected by the cameras it was also decided that only images collected during the first 15 days of each month would be processed and analyzed for both years.

The cameras were programmed to take a burst of three photos upon trigger, with a one-minute delay between bursts to minimize repeat photographs of the same event. At some locations cameras were re-programmed to take two photos per trigger to minimize the risk

of the SD card reaching capacity between servicing visits. Because of the one-minute delay, it is likely that individuals crossed in front of the cameras immediately after an event and were not recorded, but it is also likely that repeat individuals passed in front of the camera later and were recorded twice. This study's aim was not to determine the exact number of individual recreationalists visiting, or species occurring within, the Preserve. Rather, these data are intended to provide the frequency of occurrence of an activity or species relative to other camera locations to assess patterns across space and time (i.e., spatially and temporally). Lastly, unless unique individuals could be definitively distinguished, detections of a species or activity that occurred within any given 5-minute period were treated as duplicate records and excluded.

As of December 31, 2020, a total of 95,731 photos were collected by the wildlife cameras across the first 15 days of each month (excluding duplicate records). The below chart summarizes some of this data for illustrative purposes only and represents the occurrence of a particular species or activity, not unique individuals. A full report discussing the implications of the findings will be presented at a later date.

Domestic dogs were the most common animal documented on the cameras ($n = 6,916$) followed by coyotes ($n = 3,457$; Table 1). The camera located along Sumac Trail in Turnbull Canyon had the highest occurrence of wildlife ($n = 1,166$; Table 1A) whereas the camera located on Powder Canyon Trail had the lowest ($n = 122$). Both locations ranked highest in frequency of domestic animals and recreationists (Table 1B and 1C, respectively). When species-specific data were pooled Preserve-wide, the Harbor Boulevard underpass and Peppergrass Trail in Hellman Park accounted for 48% of all mule deer occurrences. Sycamore Canyon and the Core area accounted for 75% of Preserve-wide bobcat detections. Coyote detections were highest at Sumac trail (Turnbull) and Sycamore Canyon. The number of coyote detections for those two sites combined accounted for 44% of all Preserve-wide coyote detections.

Unique and uncommon wildlife occurrences include boreal toad documented at Sycamore Canyon, Greater Roadrunner and rodents at the Harbor Boulevard underpass, a bat at the Powder Canyon camera location, snakes at Sumac Trail and Virginia opossum at the Arroyo San Miguel trail camera. Gray fox were only documented at the Arroyo San Miguel and Sumac Trail locations. Reproduction (mating, presence of young, and/or lactating females) of bobcat, coyote and deer was documented at several of the camera locations.

Table 1. Number of occurrences documented by the wildlife cameras during the first 15 days of each month January 1, 2020 through December 30, 2020, listed by camera location.

A. Wildlife	Peppergrass (top of Hellman)	Sumac (Turnbull)	Sycamore	Core	Worsham	Colima tunnel	Arroyo San Miguel	Powder Canyon	Harbor Underpass	Total
	Number of Occurrences									
Amphibian species	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Bat species	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Bird species	21	81	22	65	2	17	24	38	3	273
Bobcat	13	8	101	86	5	7	23	0	6	249
Coyote	64	737	781	443	140	307	368	22	595	3,457
Cottontail rabbit	10	38	8	271	30	7	230	17	66	677
Gray fox	0	24	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	25
Invertebrate species	0	0	0	5	0	3	0	1	0	9
Lizard species	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Mule deer	98	30	79	61	19	25	16	27	140	495
Opossum, virginia	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Raccoon	2	9	18	1	0	0	0	0	24	54
Raptor species	0	3	9	3	0	0	0	4	0	19
Rodent species	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Skunk species	0	4	37	6	0	0	16	2	52	117
Snake species	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Squirrel species	0	230	1	0	0	3	73	10	4	321
Unidentified animal	0	0	0	1	1	3	16	0	2	23
	208	1,166	1,060	943	197	373	768	122	894	5,731
B. Domestic animals										
Domestic cat	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	4
Domestic dog ¹	39	31	3	0	3	1	2	28	0	107
Domestic dog - off leash	70	382	24	0	84	70	58	175	0	863
Domestic dog - on leash	533	2,367	69	0	99	150	145	2,583	0	5,946
	642	2,780	96	0	186	221	207	2,788	0	6,920
C. Recreational use										
Human - bicyclist	36	4,689	20	20	34	279	786	2,682	1	8,547
Human - equestrian	1	1	0	0	0	56	81	576	0	715
Human - hiker	10,140	53,420	13,684	88	1,575	9,248	9,606	35,833	2	133,594
	10,177	58,110	13,704	108	1,609	9,583	10,473	39,091	3	142,856
D. Non-recreational use										
Human - servicing	19	18	9	14	10	11	16	19	10	126
Human - vehicle ²	14	34	7	28	16	45	30	1,212	0	1,386
Human - worker	16	0	4	0	0	0	0	282	0	302
	49	52	20	42	26	56	46	1,513	10	1,814

¹Leash status unknown²Includes motorized recreational vehicles such as dirt bikes and e-bikes

The Preserve was closed due to rain from March 9-20 and then due to the global pandemic from March 23 through May 8. After the Preserve reopened all trails experienced an increase in recreational use compared to pre-closure use. Sumac trail in Turnbull Canyon had the largest increase in recreational use, rising from 6,198 occurrences (total, January and February) to 13,745 occurrences (total, June and July). This is presumably attributed to the closure of the Hellman trailhead parking lot leading to increased use of adjacent trails as well as unrestricted access at the Turnbull Canyon trailhead (i.e., lack of a security gate, parking on adjacent private property, possible temporary relaxation of permit parking enforcement). After-hour use of this trail is common; in fact, this was the only camera location where recreation was documented as occurring at all hours of the day and night. Despite this trail's set use hours¹, temporal recreational use patterns for this trail are similar to Powder Canyon which has sunrise-to-sunset hours.

Next Steps:

Currently, data collected during 2020 are being analyzed and data collected during the 2013 wildlife camera study are being processed by volunteers prior to being analyzed. The wildlife cameras remain deployed in the field and data collection will continue through December 2021. The 2020 and 2021 data will be compared to previous camera studies, and inferences regarding recreation and wildlife responses will be made. A full report is expected to be finished next spring.

Additional Background:

Following the change in Preserve hours, Cooper Ecological Monitoring, Inc. was hired in February 2018 to conduct a wildlife camera monitoring study and compare the resulting wildlife and recreation photos to those taken by the U.S. Geological Survey as a part of the bobcat study in 2012-13. The objective of the 2018 study was to assess the possible effects of the new Preserve hours on the overall condition of the Preserve as a result of recreational use. Trail cameras were deployed at four previously studied locations for a five-month period between February and June 2018 and analysis methods from previous reports were replicated (e.g., only the first three days of each month were analyzed for recreational usage). Results indicated that where Preserve opening hours had reduced human activity, wildlife appeared to respond positively by being active for more hours in the day. Given the 2018 contract's short duration and limited scope, the authors recommended an extended study to monitor the decline in wildlife detections of certain key species compared to the same timeframe in 2013.

Recommendation:

Receive and file.

¹ 9am-6pm June 1 through September 30. 9am-5pm October 1 through May 31

MEMORANDUM

Meeting Date: September 14, 2021

To: Citizens Technical Advisory Committee

Prepared by: Andrea Gullo, Executive Director

Agenda Item: **VIII. Discussion and possible recommendation to Board of Directors regarding approving updates to the Authority Fiscal Policy in regard to Bank Accounts.**

Background:

The Authority's Controller, the Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller, recently recommended updating the Authority's Fiscal Policy to address bank accounts. The original Fiscal Policy was approved by the Board in April 2013.

The attached draft updated Fiscal Policy adds in section II.9 addressing bank accounts. It has been reviewed by the agency Controller and attorney. The policy, in part, was modelled after the County's fiscal policies and outlines protocols and best accounting practices to follow when opening and maintaining an account.

Additional Background:

At the October 2020 Board meeting the Board authorized the Executive Director to open an Authority bank account with Wells Fargo Bank to facilitate electronic on-line donations and payments by volunteers for uniforms. This action is also consistent with the agency workplan for fiscal year 2021-22. This bank account is in the process of being opened.

Recommendation:

The CTAC recommends to the Board of Directors approval of the Authority's updated Fiscal Policy.

Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact to update the policy, however, there is a potential benefit to the agency in having a bank account with a private banking institution.

**PUENTE HILLS HABITAT PRESERVATION AUTHORITY
Endowment Provided by the Puente Hills Landfill**

FISCAL POLICY

Introduction

Establishing a central clearinghouse and procedure for financial transactions is a critical element for maintaining proper financial control and accountability. The Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority (Authority) Fiscal Policy is a guide of fiscal policies, procedures, and internal controls to safeguard and manage Authority assets. It provides clear, transparent, and authorized financial management processes with sufficient oversight to enable efficient operations of the Authority. The Authority Executive Director and assigned staff will use this Fiscal Policy as a day-to-day guide to manage and control fiscal operations and to meet her/his responsibilities to manage funds and assets.

By adoption of this Fiscal Policy, the Authority Board of Directors hereby authorizes this fiscal policy to be followed by all parties listed until amended or revoked.

I. Roles and Responsibilities

1. The joint powers agreement of the Authority authorizes the Authority Board of Directors to appoint either the Treasurer of the County of Los Angeles or a certified public accountant, holding a current California license to practice issued by the California Board of Accountancy, to be the Treasurer of Authority. The appointed Treasurer is designated as the Authority's depository to have custody of all funds of Authority from whatever source, subject to the provisions of any bond indenture or resolution. The Treasurer shall comply with the provisions of Government Code Sections 6505 and 6505.5 as those sections may be amended or as similar laws may from time to time provide.
2. The joint powers agreement of the Authority authorizes the Authority Board to appoint as Authority's Controller an employee of the Authority, the Auditor/Controller of the County of Los Angeles, or a third party individual or company with qualifications to act as Controller. The Controller shall be strictly accountable for all funds and shall report all receipts and disbursements. The Controller shall establish and maintain such funds and accounts as may be required by good accounting practice. The books and records of Authority in the hands of the Controller shall be open to inspection at all reasonable times by representatives of the Parties. The Controller within one hundred eighty (180) days after the close of each fiscal year shall give a complete written report of all financial activities for such fiscal year to the Board and shall make such further reports and cause

such audits of the accounts and records of the Authority to be made as are required by law.

3. Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller (AC), in its current role as the Controller for the Authority, provides and will continue to provide centralized billing, collection and audit services as applicable in support of the Authority. The AC also provides and will continue to provide quarterly financial activity statements showing revenue and expenditure detail and cash balances.
4. Currently, the City of Whittier (City), pays and will continue to pay the Authority credit cards statements upon receipt, which are reimbursed by the Authority. Currently, City provides and will continue to provide payroll services, which are reimbursed by the Authority.
5. Los Angeles County Treasurer and Tax Collector (TTC) currently provides and will continue to provide centralized banking services for the Authority.
6. Authority Executive Director and assigned staff provide and will continue to provide oversight and coordination of the processes described in this document. The Authority initiates and will continue to initiate all purchase requests.
7. Authority Board of Directors provides and will continue to provide review and approval of the annual budget and provide general financial management policy guidance. The Authority Board of Directors, also pursuant to the Authority Purchasing Policy, approves contracts not otherwise delegated to the Executive Director to approve.

II. Procedures

1. Budget

The Authority Board of Directors will adopt an annual operating budget. Oversight of the annual budget will be performed by the Executive Director or his/her designee. Spending and purchasing shall comply with the Board approved Purchasing Policy. Periodic reports will be provided by the Executive Director to the Board of Directors on the status of the budget, but no less than every six months on average.

2. Payments/Deposits

Payment requests for services or purchases shall be submitted by the Authority to the Controller for review and processing. All payment requests shall be accompanied by an authorization form, signed by the Executive Director. Deposits shall be sent to the

Controller and deposited into the Authority's account currently held in the Los Angeles County Treasury Pool.

3. Purchasing

All purchases and contracts shall be in compliance with the Authority Purchasing Policy approved by the Board on September 27, 2007.

4. Audit

As required by Government Code Section 6505, the Authority is required to have an annual audit of the accounts and records of the Authority. In its role as Controller, the AC will provide an annual financial audit for the Authority. The annual audit will be conducted by either the AC or through a contract with a private audit firm under the AC's supervision. The cost of the annual audit will be budgeted by the Authority and billed in arrears. The results of the audit will be reported to the Authority Board of Directors after completion as soon as practicable, but no later than 12 months after the end of the fiscal year under review.

5. Cost Recovery

In assuming the responsibilities supporting the Authority, the AC and TTC reserve the right to seek reimbursement for their costs. Their proposals for costs should be provided in advance of each fiscal year to be reviewed, approved and included in the Authority annual budget. Invoices will be submitted on a quarterly basis and within 30 business days after the end of the calendar quarter.

6. Payroll

Currently employees of the Authority are paid through the Interagency Personnel Agreement dated February 8, 2000 with the City of Whittier. All agreed upon costs incurred by the City of Whittier related to the Authority, will be reimbursed by the Authority.

7. Investment

The endowment of the Authority is managed by the TTC pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding between the two agencies dated May 17, 2011. Reimbursement for management services shall be provided to the TTC. The Executive Director is authorized to make decision(s) regarding investment of Authority funds in consultation with the Authority Chairman and Vice-Chairman and if the Authority Chairman and Vice-Chairman are not available for consultation, the Executive Director is authorized to make decision(s) regarding investment of funds provided the managing County and/or

Sanitation District investment officials are first consulted and the Authority Chairman and Vice-Chairman are subsequently advised of the decision(s).

8. Grants

When the Authority awards or receives grants the Executive Director or his/her designee shall monitor grant performance to assure compliance with the terms and conditions of the grant and also perform timely audit(s) of the grantee records as deemed necessary depending upon the scope of the grant.

9. Bank Accounts

- a) The Authority maintains its funds in the Los Angeles County Treasury Pool. Bank accounts are established with Board approval.
- b) When the Authority has accounts with private banking institutions to facilitate electronic payments, donations or other agency needs the Authority the balance will be maintained on a monthly basis at \$500 or the lowest level possible to avoid incurring monthly fees. Funds above this amount will be electronically swept to the Los Angeles County Treasury Pool. If electronic sweeps are not possible, checks will be written for deposit to the Controller and deposited into the Authority's account currently held in the Los Angeles County Treasury Pool.
- c) A formal (written) reconciliation is expected to be performed monthly, and no less than quarterly for each bank account by an individual with no deposit or check writing responsibilities. The person reconciling the account(s) must receive the bank statement directly from the bank and prepare the reconciliation in a timely manner. A similar reconciliation format will be found in the County Fiscal Manual.
- d) The AC will be advised of changes to bank accounts, such as branch locations, mailing addresses of bank statements, etc.
- e) All cancelled checks, bank statements, and monthly reconciliations must be retained for five years.
- f) Blank check stock must be stored in a secured (locked) area with access restricted to a minimum number of authorized individuals.
- g) Signing blank checks and checks made payable to cash are strictly prohibited.
- h) Checks must be pre-numbered and a check register used to record each check written.
- i) The AC will be notified in writing when bank accounts are closed.

Additional Materials

Experts call for a shift in fire defense

Forest management is not enough, some say. To save communities, they urge direct focus on homes themselves.

BY HAYLEY SMITH AND ALEX WIGGLESWORTH

As he stood amid the rubble of the town of Greenville this month, Gov. Gavin Newsom vowed to take proactive steps to protect California's residents from increasingly devastating wildfires.

"We recognize that we've got to do more in active forest management, vegetation management," Newsom said, noting that the region's extreme heat and drought are leading to "wildfire challenges the likes of which we've never seen in our history."

Yet despite a universal desire to avoid more destruction, experts aren't always in agreement about what should be done before a blaze ignites.

Forest management has long been touted as essential to fighting wildfires, with one new set of studies led by the University of Wisconsin and the U.S. Forest Service concluding that there is strong scientific evidence to support the effectiveness of thinning dense forests and reducing fuels through prescribed burns.

But some ecologists say that logging, thinning and other tactics that may have worked in the past are no longer useful in an era of ever hotter, larger and more frequent wildfires.

"The fact is that forest management is not stopping weather- and climate-driven fires," said Chad Hanson, a forest and fire ecologist and the president of the John Muir Project.

Many of California's most devastating recent fires — including 2018's deadly **Camp fire** and the Dixie fire, now the **state's second largest** on record — seared straight through forests that had been treated for fuel reduction and fire prevention purposes, Hanson said.

But reimagining well-worn approaches to forest management will require a reckoning with what is and isn't working amid the state's shifting landscape. In lieu of focusing funds and resources on fuel treatment, Hanson and other ecologists have said **the onus** should shift toward home hardening and community protection.

“This is a **climate change issue**, and you can't address it with chain saws and bulldozers or even drip torches,” Hanson said. “The only effective way to protect communities from wildland fire is to focus directly on homes.”

Though fuel reduction has been part of Cal Fire's and the U.S. Forest Service's practices for decades, former President Trump helped politicize it when he announced in 2018 that California's devastating wildfires could be thwarted by better “**raking**” the forest floors.

Yet vegetation removal is only one among a handful of strategies that fall under the umbrella of forest management — not all of which were created equal, said Morgan Tingley, an associate professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at UCLA.

Tingley outlined three basic categories of work: prescribed burns, forest thinning and clear-cutting.

Prescribed burns, also known as controlled fires, are among the better solutions for maintaining forest health, he said. But given the restrictions, planning and logistics required for those types of burns, it's impossible to use them to any real benefit.

The Forest Service this month vowed to **stomp out every fire** that ignites — a statement of political necessity that left many ecologists grimacing at the implications for the landscape.

Even more controversial than prescribed burning is mechanical thinning, a vegetation reduction process that can involve chain saws, masticators and other tools to clear out certain types of trees or densities of trees.

Although some ecologists believe that removing accumulated fuels can help limit the potential for catastrophic fires, others have argued that thinning can in fact make conflagrations worse.

One **2016 study** published by the Ecological Society of America and co-written by Hanson examined three decades of fire data across the Western U.S., and found

that protected forests — those that had not been thinned — had lower levels of burn severity despite having higher amounts of biomass and fuels.

A 2008 study published by Forest Ecology and Management similarly worked to combat misconceptions. It took a more tempered approach, noting that some forest thinning can be helpful, but also said that removing vegetation to reduce the size and frequency of wildfires is “both futile and counter-productive,” and warned that fuel reduction should not be viewed as a panacea for reducing fire hazards.

“Given the right conditions, wildlands will inevitably burn. It is a misconception to think that treating fuels can ‘fire-proof’ important areas,” the report said.

Among the primary concerns is that thinning a forest not only eliminates much of the forest’s carbon-sucking benefits, but also removes canopies that provide shade and help maintain moisture.

The 2018 Camp fire, which reduced much of the Butte County town of Paradise to ashes, burned in an area of forest that had been logged for fuel reduction and fire prevention purposes, Hanson said.

When the wind-whipped fire reached the thinned-out, sun-baked forest, it flared up so quickly that it arrived in Paradise hours sooner than it otherwise would have.

The fire ultimately destroyed 19,000 structures and killed 86 people.

“It was going to reach the town no matter what, but it definitely burned more intensely and got there faster because of the logging,” Hanson said. “I think it would have meant the difference between life and death for most of those people.”

And it’s not just the Camp fire: A similar pattern can be seen in several other high-profile fires, including the Dixie fire, the Caldor fire and the 413,000-acre Bootleg fire in Oregon, said Bryant Baker, conservation director for Los Padres ForestWatch.

Maps of those fires fit almost squarely over maps of recently logged and treated forestlands, he said.

“We’ve heard a lot of folks in the Forest Service say that we need a paradigm shift in the way we deal with fire, and almost always, it’s a shift into the same paradigm we’ve been in: Keep suppressing fires, and double down on fuel treatment and cutting vegetation,” Baker said.

“What we’re actually talking about is a real paradigm shift. We really do have to rethink how we live with wildfire.”

One major element of that paradigm shift is home hardening and community defense, Baker said. That includes steps like reducing debris from gutters, retrofitting roofs and windows with ignition-resistant materials, and moving combustible items away from homes' exteriors.

It also means improving early warning and evacuation systems within communities. If employed effectively, these strategies have been shown to protect more lives and homes during even very intense wildfires.

"It's the one blanket approach that works," he said.

Yet even as crews struggle to gain a footing on the massive Dixie fire, Forest Service officials said the blaze is doing what it was intended to do, at least in part.

"From an ecological standpoint, [fuel treatment] is not really supposed to stop fire," said Ryan Bauer, fuels and prescribed fire program manager for the Plumas National Forest. "The treatments are supposed to make the forest healthy enough to withstand fire."

He pointed to successful fuel treatments around Meadow Valley, Butterfly Valley and Twain, where he said crews were able to hold the fire off from communities. He also said the Dixie fire has burned through a mix of treated and untreated land, as well as logged areas and burn scars.

"Certain areas of the forest are really well managed, and then other parts have almost no management history in the last several decades," he said. "When the fire's this big, it's a mixed bag. It's running over everything."

Although the Forest Service had recently completed a large hazardous-fuels reduction project around Greenville that included prescribed fire, thinning and fuel breaks, Bauer said it simply wasn't enough to make a difference — particularly once winds picked up and carried spot fires over the ridge **and into the town**, with a steep drainage right behind the community also contributing to the extreme fire behavior.

Another challenge is that many communities, including Greenville, are surrounded by a buffer of private land separating them from the national forest, resulting in a patchwork of owners who are sometimes unwilling to participate in treatment projects, he said.

But what happened in Greenville adds to multiple examples in years past of **fuel breaks failing** to guard towns against wind-driven fires, which can launch embers right over them.

"There's no way to keep fire out of forests," Bauer said. "If you do it then the fuels conditions just become worse and worse until you get a really bad fire on a really

bad weather day and it burns then. All putting fire out does really is defer the risk to a future fire.”

Managers of the Plumas National Forest have known for several years that there was enough fuel on the landscape for it to be critical during any given summer when conditions are right, and it appears that time has arrived, he said.

“A year like this is the prime example of that, that year that we’ve **deferred all of our risk into**,” Bauer said. “It’s so dry this year that it doesn’t matter how much fuel is on the landscape. The fuel that’s there is going to burn. And we just have to hope that the trees on those landscapes are resilient enough to survive it.”

One thing most experts agree on is that clear-cutting — or logging all or most of the trees in an area — has almost no benefits to the forests or to their surrounding communities.

That the Forest Service remains in the **timber sales business** is something that has left some ecologists flummoxed, particularly since the federal agency is still required to meet annual quotas known as timber targets.

“Clear-cutting is a purely economic choice,” said Tingley, of UCLA. “It is. There is no forest that is healthier if all the trees are cut down.”

When mechanical thinning or logging are done for profit — or when whoever is doing it gets to use the timber they’re taking out — that instead incentivizes removing the oldest, biggest and strongest trees, which fetch a higher price, and leaves behind the trees that are the least fire-resilient, he said.

In March, more than 300 scientists, stakeholders and community members signed a **letter to Newsom** asking him to reconsider his wildfire budget allocations for 2021 and 2022, noting that logging and clearance projects have “consistently failed to protect our neighborhoods from wildfire.”

The budget includes more than \$1 billion to increase the pace and scale of forest management and fuel reduction projects, the governor’s office said. \$100 million has been allocated to building disaster-resilient communities.

Rick Halsey, the California Chaparral Institute director who spearheaded the letter, said he is growing increasingly frustrated by the imbalance.

“There’s essentially nothing we can do on the landscape to stop these fires because the environment is conducive to them, so we have to sort of stare that in the face and acknowledge it,” Halsey said. “What can we do? We can protect communities.”

That means focusing on making homes less permeable to embers, reducing flammable materials within 100 feet of structures and preventing developers

from placing neighborhoods in harm's way, he said.

Hanson echoed the sentiment as he walked through the scar of a wildfire in the San Bernardino National Forest, pointing to dense vegetation and old-growth trees that withstood catching and spreading the flames.

If wildfire management could shift from a forest-focused approach to a homes-focused one, he said, more tragedies like those of Paradise and Greenville could be avoided.

“We don't need to lose another community — and another community and another community — every fire season,” he said. “Once we start focusing on the right places, it's going to be incredibly effective.”