

Minutes: Plateau Management Committee 06/03/2020

Online meeting

Committee Members Present:

- Dustin McLain, Riverside County Regional Park & Open Space District
- Zack Principe, The Nature Conservancy
- Alexander Marks, Metropolitan Water District

Reserve staff reports:

- Visitor center and interpretation, Rob Hicks - Riverside County Regional Park & Open Space District
- Ranger Patrol and activities, Bill Evans - Riverside County Regional Park & Open Space District
- Reserve Management, Hailey Laskey – Center for Natural Lands Management

Guests:

- Kim Klementowski, Center for Natural Lands Management
- Oscar Serrato, Riverside County Regional Park & Open Space District
- Susan North, The Nature Conservancy
- Ginger Greeves, Santa Rosa Plateau Nature Education Foundation

1. Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 10:10 am by Dustin McLain.

2. Approval of 03/04/2020 minutes:

Dustin asked if the minutes were nominated for approval. Zack moved to approve. Alex gave a second to the approval. All approved and the motioned was carried.

3. Public comments:

None

4. Staff reports:

Visitor Center and Interpretation - Rob Hicks:

Rob spoke of the educational programs being closed and his continued work assisting on the closure. The interactions have been different and difficult in dealing with the visitors regarding closures. Rob is working on videos and online content for the fall.

Ranger Patrol and Activities - Bill Evans:

We have been focusing on access control and the parking lots in particular on the weekends. Hidden valley is being utilized when Sylvan fills up. As the day heats up our visitation levels drop and we are able to close the Hidden valley lot.

The hours for Sylvan have been changed to 7 am to 6 pm. Most guests are accepting of the change but we are hearing from those passionate about us remaining open until sunset as well. Without the volunteers and staff redirecting guests at the trailheads guests are going into the closed reserve. Rob and Mary Ruth have been doing the bulk of the interaction between the closing time of Sylvan Meadows and sunset while being assisted by our great volunteers.

We closed due to the covid outbreak during the first week of March. The district which has seen a reduction of staff has sent staff from other areas to assist. They have been a great help. We reopened Sylvan Meadows on April 25th.

We have continued to post fencing and signs on the Murrieta side. They have continued to be removed at times. I expect this to be an ongoing issue as it is in other open space areas surrounded by urban areas.

Reserve Manager Report - Hailey Laskey

- She has been working on coordinating and planning two prescribed fires—one in the Tenaja corridor on the CDFW Hines Property and the other within the core Reserve located on the Hidden Valley and Colorado Management units.
 - The first prescribed fire in the Tenaja Corridor is to manage the thatch and flush the seed bank for the invasive yellow star thistle. The burn is separated into three plots, and two of the smaller plots were burned on May 12th. However, the plots were too wet and prevented the fire from burning hot enough to reduce yellow star thistle thatch. So, to meet her goals of managing yellow star thistle, the prescribed fire for the third plot was postponed until fuel moisture levels decrease.
 - The second prescribed fire within the Hidden Valley and Colorado plots is scheduled to burn today, June 3. This prescribed fire is 189 acres and includes areas that have not burned since 1997. The goal for this fire is to reduce thatch and manage target invasive species like Italian thistle and jointed goat grass.
 - In addition to coordinating the prescribed fire, Hailey worked on prepping the burns by mowing the roads and roadsides. She also collected data on 25 of the 92 long-term grassland vegetation transects within the burn program.
- The April rains created positive breeding conditions for Arroyo Toads. She has conducted 4 surveys, 2 nighttime and 2 day time surveys. One adult was heard calling in mid-April but no tadpoles have been found.

- Additional successful herpetology surveys occurred by other agencies on the SRPER this spring. USGS surveyed all vernal pools for spadefoot toad and the MSHCP surveyed Cole Creek, Adobe Creek, and De Luz Creek for California Newt.
- Lastly, within the Tenaja Fire burn scar, Hailey and colleagues from partnering agencies have removed over 500 stinknet plants and covered about 400 acres of the 1792 acres of the Tenaja Fire Burn Scar. Robert Dotta, a volunteer who does trail patrol on the illegal trails adjacent to the City of Murrieta has reported stinknet along those trails as well. Removal efforts are currently moving from West to East, but the plants are quickly senescing. Stinknet was likely introduced from County Transportation Agency and spreads easily along roadways and trails—including illegal trails and game trails.

Dustin asked Hailey about the cost of rehab and a conversation went from there on the varying amounts needed. Dustin said he thought a discussion on how we could help would be in order.

5. Tenaja fire Funding update and discussion: Ginger Greeves

Ginger thanked the committee for her chance to address the committee. Ginger gave an update on the funds and the disbursement. She spoke of additional funds coming in next year. A digital file was given for review of the related issues discussed.

6. Update on current post fire fencing and status of fencing request for bids.

Dustin gave an update on the projects plan and the job walk scheduled for June 10th. He hoped the project could start in July.

7. Roundtable: 11:17

Ginger said she is open to working to support the reserve in new ways. Zack gave a brief update on the frog project. He said the red legged frog project was projected to last for two years or more. Zack mentioned he also followed up on the raised walkway project discussed in the past. He was told California Environmental Quality act CEQA would need to be completed before the project. Dustin said he has dealt with those issues before and had some ideas on the issue.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 11:20 AM.

Next meeting will be September 2, 2020. The meeting will take place at the Lake Skinner Recreation Area- Los Alamos School House 37701 Warren road Road Winchester Ca 92596 or Via MS Teams if Covid Restrictions are still applicable.