



April 2, 2019
VIA EMAIL

Jay Handal, Budget Advocates Co-Chairperson
Joanne Yvanek-Garb. Budget Advocates Co-Chairperson
Carol Newman, Budget Advocate

Dear Jay, Joanne & Carol,

REQUEST FOR A LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION & PARKS
RANGER STATION IN THE SEPULVEDA BASIN RECREATION AREA

History

The Sepulveda Flood Control Basin in the San Fernando Valley occupies 2031 acres, containing two golf courses, two man-made lakes, one of which is surrounded by a native-plant-wildlife area, sports fields, open parkland, and the Tillman Water Reclamation Plant. The Los Angeles River runs directly through the basin, as does the 101 Freeway. The water flow is controlled by a dam on the Los Angeles River, operated by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE).

Substantially, all of the Sepulveda Basin Recreation Area (2,000 acres) is within Los Angeles City Council District 6 (Councilperson Nury Martinez). Large portions of the land are leased by the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation & Parks (RAP) from the ACOE. The Sepulveda Basin is reported to be the 51st largest city-owned park in the United States, and the 7th largest in California. Two other large Los Angeles city-owned parks are Griffith Park (4,217 acres) and Hansen Dam (1,437 acres). The City of Los Angeles' portion of the San Fernando Valley houses approximately 1.7 million people, easily in the top 10 by population of US Cities.

Law enforcement in the Sepulveda Basin falls largely upon the City of Los Angeles Park Rangers, and the Los Angeles Police Department in cases of emergency. According to the RAP website “The mission of the City of Los Angeles Park Ranger Division is to enrich the lives of the residents of Los Angeles by providing safe, welcoming parks and recreation facilities for people of all ages to play, learn, contemplate, build a sense of community, and be good stewards of our environment. Park Rangers, through careful efforts, protect those who are using parks and protect park resources so that future generations may enjoy them.”

Park Rangers currently only provide service to Griffith Park, Runyon Canyon, Elysian Park, Hansen Dam, Debs Park, and the Harbor Regional Recreation Area. “

That said, Park Rangers have been as responsive as possible to requests for assistance. The problem is that deployment from Hansen Dam or Griffith Park can take an extraordinary amount of time. There have been, and continue to be, persistent issues with bad and potentially criminal behavior in the Sepulveda Basin, especially in the wildlife and lake areas. These include illegal fishing, hunting, disturbing animals and plants by bringing dogs and bicycles into restricted areas, alcohol and drug use. The situation is further complicated by large and pervasive homeless encampments in various areas of the Sepulveda Basin and in other parks throughout the San Fernando Valley.

The resources of RAP, including the Ranger Division, were severely curtailed during the “Great Recession” of 2008. Further, the City of Los Angeles General Services Police, which were largely responsible for enforcement in the city parks, were eliminated in 2012-2013 and folded into the Los Angeles Police Department with apparently no clear plan as to how to handle enforcement in the parks.

Request for a RAP Ranger Station in the Sepulveda Basin

The Encino and Lake Balboa Neighborhood Councils jointly share representation of the Sepulveda Basin Recreation Area. Both councils have been involved for many years in attempting to get better law and fish and game enforcement in the Sepulveda Basin, especially in the wildlife and lake areas. Both Neighborhood councils are represented on the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Areas Steering Committee (SBWASC), a consortium of organizations which were instrumental in development of the wildlife areas of the basin. A very brief review of the minutes of the SBWASC indicates multiple requests, going back many years, to the Los Angeles City Council and Mayor’s office for a dedicated ranger station in the Sepulveda Basin. At the January 26, 2016 meeting, councilmember Paul Koretz noted that he was not aware that the Basin did not have a ranger, that the city of Los Angeles was slowly restoring the 5,000 personnel laid off during the Great Recession and that he would advocate for a Sepulveda Basin Ranger as part of his budget request.

The Sepulveda Basin is a unique area which deserves consistent ranger presence to both enforce rules, protect recreating families, and to educate park users. Further, having a RAP Ranger Station in the Sepulveda Basin would provide a base for responding more quickly to issues that arise in other City of Los Angeles Parks in the south San Fernando Valley (for example, Reseda Park).

The Neighborhood Councils were in part formed in response to the attempt by the San Fernando Valley to secede from the City of Los Angeles. A significant reason for the secession movement was an inequitable distribution of city resources to the San Fernando Valley. A major obligation of each Neighborhood Council is to advocate for its area, and to ensure that it receives a fair share of City of Los Angeles funding and resources. The Sepulveda Basin is a very large park in a very populated urban area. The park, its neighbors, and park users should receive a fair share of city services.

Accordingly, the Encino and Lake Balboa Neighborhood Councils, with support of the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society, request that the Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates please consider this request a top priority for funding during budget negotiations. Further, this request is being forwarded to the entire Budget and Finance Committee, and the Arts, Parks, and River committees of the Los Angeles City Council, District 6 Councilwoman Nury Martinez, as well as the Mayor's office.

We respectfully ask that every possible effort be made to establish a Sepulveda Basin dedicated ranger station, staffed with RAP Rangers. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Alex Garay, President
Encino Neighborhood Council

Patricia Bates, Treasurer
Encino Neighborhood Council

Shelley Billik, Chair, Parks & Environment Committee
Encino Neighborhood Council

cc:

Mayor Eric Garcetti
Deputy Mayor Barbara Romero
Councilperson Nury Martinez
Councilperson Paul Krekorian
Councilperson Greig Smith
Councilperson Paul Koretz
Councilperson Bob Blumenfield
Councilperson Mike Bonin
Councilperson David Ryu
Councilperson Mitch O'Farrell
Councilperson Curren Price
Councilperson Herb Wesson
Councilperson Gil Cedillo
Councilperson Jose Huizar
Councilperson Monica Rodriguez
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