



Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation, Inc.

Post Office Box 353, Agoura Hills, California 91301



June 2009, MEETING (www.lvhf.org)

Thursday, 18 June 2009, 7:30 – 10:00 P.M.

The Place – Diamond X – Take Las Virgenes to Mulholland; turn left on Mulholland. For the next 3/4 mile, the King Gillette Ranch will be on your right. After you’ve passed Stokes Canyon Road, in about 3/4 mile, you will see a sign on your right with “Diamond X” and the National Park Service logo on it. A short distance past the sign a narrow road goes south at a right angle. This is Wickland Road, and, at this point you are entering the King Gillette Ranch. Follow Wickland about 300 yards until the road forks; take the left-hand fork; keep bearing left to lighted house. Park; get out of your car; go into the lighted part of the house.

**Call to Order
Roll Call
Agenda Changes/ Approval**

**Approval of Meeting Minutes
Correspondence/Announcements
Officer’s Reports**

Old Business/ Reports

New Business

Delegates Reports

MALIBU CREEK STATE PARK THREATENED WITH CLOSURE

The voters' rejection of last month's state budget compromise has left the people of California looking at a **\$24.9 million state budget shortfall**.

One of the more drastic measures being proposed by **Governor Schwarzenegger** to address this shortfall is to "mothball" or put into "caretaker status" (i.e. "close") 80% of the state parks in California, including our own **Malibu Creek State Park**. Malibu Creek State Park, takes up much of the Las Virgenes Valley and extends east and west from Malibu Canyon to Malibou Lake and north and south from Liberty Canyon to the ridgeline and Castro Peak. Its 10,000-plus acres border on parts of the Monte Nido, Malibou Lake, Liberty Canyon, and Cold Creek communities. With its spectacular buttes and gorges and oak-dotted hills and meadows, it has been described as the "crown jewel" of the Santa Monica Mountains park system, and it is certainly the scenic heart of the Las Virgenes Area.

So how do you "close" a 10,000-plus acre state park that has an estimated twenty linear miles of unfenced boundaries, half of which have direct access off of paved public roads? Would the State have to install twenty miles of high cyclone fencing to prevent access to this "closed" park? And more importantly, would the cost of constructing those twenty miles of secure fencing be greater than the cost of keeping the park open and patrolling it.

Couldn't we just patrol the park with mounted volunteers (assuming we could find enough citizens willing to make that sort of time commitment on a regular basis)? Here are some of the problems they might face:

Law Enforcement – Next time you encounter a state park ranger, you may notice that they are armed. That's because they are trained peace officers and, on rare occasions, they may even need to use that weapon. On the other hand, the average local equestrian volunteer doesn't pack a gun and has no law enforcement training. He can spot trouble and report it to a ranger, but, if there's no ranger left to report it to, an equestrian volunteer can't be expected to take on a major law enforcement problem on his own.

Illegal Camping – Without regular ranger patrols homeless people and others might camp illegally in parks. Some will set illegal fires if there is no one there to stop them and some of these groups may be too large or too obstreperous for a couple of citizen volunteers to deal with without ranger backup.

Illegal Parties – Without regular ranger patrols people may find "closed" parks to be good locations for "beer busts" and other illegal parties. Many of the people involved in these parties are likely to be intoxicated and will probably be more than one or two equestrian volunteers can handle.

Rescue – Many hikers and climbers have been trapped or injured on the rugged Goat Buttes in Malibu Creek State Park since it opened in 1976. In many cases they've had to be rescued by rangers or groups trained in rescue work called in by rangers. In all parts of the park there is a potential for injury from falls, rockfalls, drowning, and snakebite. Rangers are trained in rescue work and in the

treatment of injuries. The average visitor to an un-patrolled park doesn't have such training.

Poaching Of Wildlife – Without ranger patrols to deter poaching, illegal hunters will have easy access right off the road to Malibu Creek State Park and its priceless populations of deer, hawks, eagles, coyotes, bobcats, and cougars.

Illegal Marijuana “Farms” – Both National Park Service and State Park officials report they have been dealing increasingly with illegal “pot farms” in their parks. These are not the work of hippies or local teenagers; they are the work of the same Mexican drug cartels that are threatening law and order south of the border. Apparently our Border Patrol has become so efficient at intercepting drug smugglers that they are now growing the stuff in parks and national forests on our side of the line.

These cartels are very efficient at finding water sources and hiding their plantings under dense chaparral. They dam and divert streams or tap into fire hydrants. They clear out native vegetation and spray large amounts of herbicides and rodenticides around their plantings. Then they bring in armed guards and set up camps in little-used areas of the park.

Rangers report the discovery of two marijuana plantations in Malibu Creek State Park recently. The growers drove in the Craggs Drive gate late at night. Residents of Malibu Lake reported hearing truck engines, but probably thought it was some filming operation. In both cases rangers discovered the plantings and laboriously pulled them out by hand and trucked off all the chemicals and PVC pipe.

Rangers tell us they don't go into remote areas of the park to check for illegal plantings without first calling out so that the armed men guarding the plantings have time to get away. What would happen if we didn't have rangers to pull out the marijuana plants and warn innocent hikers and equestrians of the risk of entering certain remote park areas?

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It's easy to blame our elected officials for this budget fiasco, but we have also contributed to it. For years we have generously voted for billions of dollars in state bond issues to pay for a wide range of school, water, transportation, park, and prison projects because we felt these were worthwhile expenditures of our tax dollars. But, at the same time we were committing the state to pay off billions in school bonds, water bonds, park bonds, prison bonds, high-speed rail bonds, and a host of other seemingly worthy programs, we were also voting for initiatives that made it more and more difficult for the state to raise the revenue needed to pay for all of this.

Because we, the people of California, have chosen to pass initiatives that reduced some sources of state revenue and required a 2/3 vote of the legislature to approve any new sources of revenue, we may now find it difficult to continue to come up with the funds to maintain present levels of public services. There has even been talk of the state taking revenue from our local cities to keep state programs operating. What is more many of

these same initiatives have locked in funding that has left the Legislature discretionary control over only about 10% of the State budget. The proposal to close Malibu Creek State Park may be just one sign of a new era of financial challenges in California.

The depth of this crisis should bring us to the point of looking for real reform to the way the State operates and sets its budget. It is abundantly clear that the current system is not working and needs a significant overhaul to solve significant and fundamental problems.

In the meantime, the **Legislature's Budget Conference Committee** has already held hearings on the State Park Budget and has proposed a \$15 increase in the automobile license fee that would support state park operations while, at the same time, giving any California resident free access to state parks. If you think this option would be preferable to closing Malibu Creek and other state parks, you might want to drop a note to the Governor and our State Representatives to that effect,

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, State Capitol, Sacramento 95814.
governor@governor.ca.gov

Senator Fran Pavley, 4035 State Capitol, Sacramento 90248

Fax: (916) 324-4823 senator.pavley@sen.ca.gov

Assemblymember Julia Brownley, 2163 State Capitol, Sacramento 95814
Fax: (916) 319-2141 jbrownley@asm.ca.gov

ELECTRONIC MEETING NOTIFICATION IN CALABASAS

On Tuesday, June 2nd in a Special Workshop Meeting, Calabasas City Council directed staff to establish a new electronic notification option, enabling residents as well as HOA's to simply sign up and receive up-to-date information of pending planning & permit applications *citywide*.

Electronic notification addresses the difficulties of acquiring timely information regarding City meetings and hearings, and, improves the current distribution of information by sector to HOA's. It will no longer be necessary to sort information and its applicability as everyone who signs up receives the same thing. This gives residents interested in other areas of the City a chance to be informed and become involved. In addition, it ensures interested citizens will get information even if HOA's do not keep the City updated with current board member contacts. It is not uncommon for notices to not be passed on or distributed – which can leave communities and residents uninformed on significant issues that may have an impact on their neighborhoods.

This proposal was introduced by Councilmember James Bozajian and supported by all Councilmembers. The hope is that electronic notification will ultimately save time and trouble for both staff and interested citizens and create a more knowledgeable and engaged citizenry throughout the city.

GUNS IN NATIONAL PARKS?

Citizens who inspect the fine print of AB 627, the credit card reform law, passed by Congress last month will find a section that has nothing to do with credit cards. Buried deep in this new law is **Section 512**, which says in part,

“ ... The Secretary of the Interior shall not promulgate or enforce any regulation that prohibits an individual from possessing a firearm, including an assembled and functional firearm in any unit of the National Park System ... “

Section 512 was slipped into **AB 627** by **Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK)** that was passed by both houses of Congress and signed by President Obama. There is a longstanding Congressional tradition of attaching unrelated and potentially controversial amendments or riders to critical legislation that has strong support for passage.

So does this mean delegates can pack their favorite “rod” into their belt and bring it with them to the next Federation meeting (provided they have all of the necessary permits)?

Section 512 says,

“...the second amendment rights of an individual at a unit of the National Park System (and Diamond X is a “unit of the National Park System”) shall not be infringed.”

Section 512 also says,

“Congress needs to weigh in so as to ensure that unelected bureaucrats and judges cannot override the second amendment rights of law abiding citizens on 83,600,000 acres of National Park System land...”

This last sentence may be a key to understanding what may underlie this and other recently introduced legislation challenging Federal authority over gun control laws. Legislatures in two states, Montana and Tennessee, have passed laws designed to bring the issue of Federal authority to regulate guns before the Supreme Court. The election of President Obama and a significant shift in power to the Democrats appears to have energized those concerned about the potential restrictions of second amendment rights by the courts and government officials. On the other hand, these challenges are coming at a time when there have been a number of high-profile shootings in public places.

In researching this article, we contacted the office of our former Congressman Brad Sherman. His office assured us that Congressman Sherman and Congressmen Waxman, Berman, and Schiff specifically did not vote for Section 512.

If you would like to contact your Congressman on this or any other issue you will find contact information for them, along with your Senators and State and County representatives at the end of this month's *Newsletter*.

FIRE EXPOS COMING UP

With another long, dry summer upon us, the **Los Angeles County Fire Department** is offering two free “**Fire Expos**” to help residents find out how to prepare their home, land, and evacuation plan in the event of a wildland fire.

These “Fire Expos” will include “exhibits and vendors specializing in emergency supplies, fire resistant improvements, personal protective equipment, and firefighting systems and products for use prior to evacuation.”

Here are the dates and locations for the two “Fire Expos” coming up in the next few weeks.

SATURDAY, JUNE 20,
10:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Fire Station 89
29575 Canwood Street
Agoura Hills

SATURDAY, JUNE 27
10:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Malibu Bluffs Park
24250 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu

CALABASAS ARSON WATCH

The **Calabasas Arson Watch**, concentrated in Monte Nido, but increasingly involving residents of other communities has been in operation for a quarter century, raising community fire awareness and mobilizing to patrol during fire hazard weather, using its own two-way radio network. Arson Watch members are registered Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department volunteers administered through the Lost Hills Station. Calabasas Arson Watch is part of a larger network that includes groups in Agoura, Topanga and Malibu.

Volunteers are welcome. Those who cannot volunteer their time are encouraged to make donations to **Friends of Arson Watch and Disaster Services**.

For more information, contact **Abigail Bok**, habigailbok@gmail.com or call her at (310) 455-1179. Friends of Arson Watch and Disaster Services (FAWDS, Inc.) is a 501 (c) (3), so all donations are tax deductible.

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**The next Federation meeting at Diamond X Ranch will be at 7.30 pm
on Thursday, July 16th.**

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