



Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation, Inc.

Post Office Box 353, Agoura Hills, California 91301



March 2009, MEETING (www.lvhf.org)

Thursday, 19 March 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**

A Conversation with Gina Natoli – Supervising Los Angeles County Regional Planner

Old Business/ Reports

**Correspondence/Announcements, Approval of Meeting Minutes
Officer’s Reports, Delegates Reports
Banquet Report**

New Business

Delegates interested in County Planning issues in the Las Virgenes area, shouldn't miss Thursday night's Federation meeting. Our guest will be County Supervising Regional Planner, **Gina Natoli**, who has many years experience working first on the North Area Plan, then on the Mulholland State Scenic Highway, and, more recently, on the **Santa Monica Mountains Local Coastal Plan**. Here's your chance to get answers to your questions about county plans that affect all of our communities.

The Federation congratulates incumbents **James Bozajian, Mary Sue Maurer** and **Jonathon Wolfson** who were re-elected to Calabasas City Council on Tuesday, March 3rd. We look forward to continue working with you in the future.

Also, the 2009 Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation Installation Banquet is coming up on Friday, April 3.

Once again, thanks to the generosity of the Malibou Lake Mountain Club, we will be back at their wonderful facility right in the center of the Santa Monicas.

This year's featured speaker is Richard W. Halsey, Director of the California Chaparral Institute, a research and educational organization focusing on the ecology of California's shrubland ecosystems, the dynamics of wildland fire in both natural and human communities, and the importance of nature education. Mr. Halsey has taught biology and natural science for over thirty years in both public and private schools. His current research projects include investigating the impact of increased fire frequency on chaparral and other shrubland ecosystems and the importance of local communities connecting with their surrounding, natural landscapes.

By now you should have received the formal invitation electronically and by regular mail with all of the details.

Please join us for an interesting evening of interesting conversation, good food, fun – and you'll find out who will be Citizen of the year for 2009.

NEW REGULATIONS ON WATER USE FROM LVMWD

Editor's note: The following information on water conservation measures has been supplied to us by the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District.

In response to the state and local water supply shortage, the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District (LVMWD) Board of Directors has adopted mandatory water conservation measures that will carry penalties for non-compliance that began on March 4.

The mandatory measures now include:

- Irrigation is prohibited between the hours of 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.
- Irrigation is not permitted during periods of rain nor in the 24 hours following rainfall in excess of one inch.
- Irrigation may not run off to streets, gutters or adjacent properties.

- Potable water shall not be used to clean or sweep hard surfaces such as sidewalks, walkways, parking areas and driveways, unless an approved water conservation broom is used and only as necessary to protect public health and safety.
- Car washing is permitted only with the use of a nozzle having an automatic shutoff.
- Restaurants shall only serve water upon request.
- Hotels & motels shall offer multi-night guests the option to retain towels and linens during their stay.

The public may report violations by calling 818-251-2180.

Violations of the adopted measures will escalate for repeat instances of non-compliance within a 12-month period.

- First Violation – Warning letter
- Second Violation - \$50
- Third violation - \$100
- Fourth violation - \$250
- Fifth violation - Restriction or termination of water service

In addition, the adopted ordinance states, “The District shall assist in the promotion of water efficient irrigation practices by monitoring compliance with landscaping plans approved by cities and the county under the Water Conservation in Landscaping Act. The District shall notify the city or county with jurisdiction by law if it is determined that a landscaping plan has been breached.”

John R. Mundy, LVMWD’s general manager said, “These measures apply to all Las Virgenes Municipal Water District customers and are necessary to help reduce water use. With nearly 70 percent of the water we deliver used outdoors, we do not believe it will be difficult for customers to comply with these basic conservation practices.” He added that homeowners and businesses that employ landscape maintenance firms should take steps to be sure irrigation systems are appropriately maintained, properly timed and only operating when necessary. “There will be no waivers on penalties for negligence,” he said.

Mr. Mundy said LVMWD is also preparing to implement mandatory water “budgets”. “The current water supply situation is not good and will not improve anytime soon. Customers will need to set priorities on how they use water and make do with their individual budgeted amount.” Mr. Mundy went on to emphasize that wasting water now will not result in a higher budgeted allocation. “The budgets will not be based on previous use,” he said.

Prior to the implementation of budgets, the District will conduct several community meetings to explain the budget system and to answer questions customers may have. “We want and need the cooperation of the community in responding to the water crisis.

We will go ‘the extra mile’ to help customers understand the budget system, which can only work if everyone does their share,” Mundy said.

Las Virgenes Municipal Water District supports customer conservation efforts through education programs that include water-efficient home gardening workshops, facility tours, community event conservation outreach, school programs, information on the District’s website and in printed materials.

The District also offers rebate programs for qualifying water-efficient devices that are purchased and installed in customer homes. Eligible items include certain water-efficient clothes washers, toilets, weather-based irrigation controllers and lawn sprinkler heads. A list of qualifying items, brands and models can be found at www.LVMWD.com under “conservation.”

Customers do not have to make a purchase to conserve water, however. Simple water-wise practices such as using a broom to sweep a driveway or sidewalk, taking vehicles to a car wash where water is recycled, turning off the water when brushing teeth or shaving, washing only full loads of laundry or dishes, and promptly repairing leaks when they appear are all easy ways to reduce consumption.

Here is the schedule of community meetings the District will be holding over the next few weeks.

All meetings are from 7:30 – 8:30 p.m.

- Thursday, April 30 Westlake Village City Hall – Community Room, 31200 Oak Crest Drive, Westlake Village.
- Tuesday, May 5 Salvation Army Camp Craggs – Flick Meeting Hall, Tapia State Park, Enter at main gate and follow road.
- Thursday, May 7 Willow School – Multi-purpose Room, 29026 Laro Drive, Agoura.
- Tuesday, May 19 The Church at Rocky Peak – Meeting Room, 22601 Santa Susana Pass Road, Chatsworth.
- Thursday, May 21 Calabasas Civic Center – Library Meeting Room, 100 Civic Center Way, Calabasas. (TENTATIVE)
- Thursday, June 4 AHCCC – Agoura Room, 27040 Malibu Hills Road, Calabasas.
- Thursday, June 11 Malibou Lake Mountain Club – Main Room, 29033 Lake Vista Drive, Agoura.

CAN WE KEEP COUGARS FROM HAVING TO DATE THEIR COUSINS?

Because they are such shy, secretive animals, most Las Virgenes residents probably don’t realize that the world’s fourth largest cat, *Felis concolor*, also known as “cougar” or “mountain lion” occasionally visits the open spaces surrounding our communities.

In the 1990's *The Los Angeles Times* published several articles about how freeways and urban developments were chopping up habitat and blocking "wildlife corridors" around the San Fernando Valley to the point where the Santa Monica Mountains were in danger of becoming a "biological island" with a badly degraded gene pool. This was a special problem for cougars because they require ranges of tens to over a hundred square miles.

Even our former **Congressman Brad Sherman** used to tell corny jokes about how our cougars would soon become forced to date their cousins.

The *Times* articles led to public recognition of the problem, and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy ended up purchasing a quarter mile wide corridor between Malibu Creek State Park and Agoura Road just west of Liberty Canyon. The area along Agoura Road was planted in native trees and shrubs in hopes wildlife would find its way to the 4-lane Liberty Canyon Interchange and on to NPS land to the northwest. But, though the Conservancy had built a "wildlife corridor", the years went by and no animals came to make use of it. To make matters worse an uncooperative landowner forced the Conservancy to narrow the "corridor" to a few yards next to the Freeway fence just west of the interchange. The "wildlife corridor" was beginning to look like a hopeless pipe dream ...

A few weeks ago a new cougar, a two-year old, 135-pound male, showed up in the Simi Hills. He was quickly radio-collared and named "P (for "puma") 12". For a while he wandered around the Simi Hills, but in late February he showed up in lower Cheeseboro Canyon. P-12 was still hanging around Lower Cheeseboro on the evening of Monday March 2nd, sending out a signal every two hours. At 1:00 AM on Tuesday his signal showed him still to be in lower Cheeseboro but, at 3:00 AM, his signal showed he was well south of the Freeway high-tailing it for Malibu Creek State Park.

The Park Service has searched the area along the Freeway for tracks or other evidence trying to figure out where P12 made his late night dash across the Freeway, but they have found no clues to date. Since flying cougars are something of a rarity, the best guess is that P12 made it under that 4-lane-wide Liberty Canyon Underpass. At last word he was hanging out in Malibu Creek State Park, liberated for now from the need to date his cousins.

MALIBU VALLEY FARMS UPDATE

On Wednesday, March 11th the Coastal Commission met in closed session in Monterey to decide which action it would take in regard to the Superior Court's recent decision overturning their approval of Malibu Valley Farms.

Superior Court Judge Chalfont gave the Commission "alternatives" for resolving the core issue that caused the approval to be overturned.

That "core issue" is whether the County Environmental Review Board's 2003 recommendation in favor of the removal of structures that had been built without permits

too close to Stokes Creek could somehow be interpreted as an approval of the entire project heard and approved by the Coastal Commission in 2007. This was the argument put forward at the original hearing by the owner, Brian Boudreau and his attorney, Fred Gaines.

In its decision last month, the Court appeared to accept the argument that the ERB approval applied only to the removal of the un-permitted structures and not to the development as a whole. This was the basis for Judge Chalfant's ruling that the Coastal Commission did not present sufficient evidence in its findings to support its decision to exempt Malibu Valley Farms from the 100' riparian setback requirement. Now, however, Judge Chalfant, though he has opposed calling for a new trial, appeared to be wavering.

With the outcome hanging by such a narrow thread, a decision that the ERB's 2003 approval of the removal of the un-permitted structures was in fact somehow an approval of the entire 2007 development could ultimately lead to the reversing of Judge Chalfant's ruling on appeal.

On March 5th Judge Chalfant held a meeting of attorneys representing all parties to find a way to resolve what he perceived to be a dilemma. Judge Chalfant concluded,

"As a matter of law ... the one page ERB document relied on does not show that the ERB considered existing structures. If there is other evidence in the record on which the Commission can rely to conclude that the scope of the ERB hearing included existing structures, it may do that, or it may conduct a new hearing on what was the scope of the ERB decision, or it may separately decide to impose less than a hundred-foot setback on its own authority without relying on the ERB decision."

Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, who sent strong testimony at the time the Coastal Commission approved its findings for Malibu Valley Farms also sent in another strong letter to the Commission stating,

"The Court found the Commission should not have relied on the false (sic) premise offered by the applicant and his representatives that Los Angeles County's Environmental Review Board had approved this project in 2003. In fact, as I stated in my June, 2008, letter to the Commission, the ERB only reviewed a much smaller subset of the overall project and never had the opportunity to consider questions about proper setbacks from streams, water quality, and other environmental quality mitigation measures that the Commission was ultimately called upon to decide."

Supervisor Yaroslavsky continued,

"... Every interested party must have the opportunity to offer input and relevant evidence in a public setting, preferably in a public hearing in the community where the project is located. Whether the Commission decides to reopen the public hearing or to return the entire matter to Los Angeles County for full review, I respectfully urge you to proceed in public and in a manner that allows all information to be heard and considered."

As of today, we have not heard what the Coastal Commission decided to do in this matter so stay tuned for further developments.

THE 2010 CENSUS IS UPON US

Address canvassing in advance of the 2010 Census is in full swing, and local Crew Leaders are asking for help from Federation delegates.

In order to verify addresses for next year's mailing of questionnaires to every U.S. household, Census workers will visit every place where people live or could live (homes under construction now, for example). In our area, this process begins in about two weeks.

According to Crew Leader, Penny Suess, "One of the difficulties we face is getting into gated communities and onto the doorsteps of homes to "map spot" them on hand-held computers with GPS capability. No interviews are involved, and residents do not even need to be at home. All Census employees are sworn to complete confidentiality, and not even other federal agencies have access to personal information. When a Crew Leader identifies a community that workers cannot get into, we would like to be able to call a resident who could arrange to let someone in."

Suess also said, "The Census will have important consequences for Congressional representation, federal and state funding, and redistricting — the better the count, the more California will benefit. Thanks in advance for your help!"

For more information, please call Penny Suess, Seminole Springs, 818-889-7473.

P.S. The Census Bureau is providing the "economic stimulus" of temporary employment to 8,000-plus people for this operation in our area alone.