

Big T Wash Line

APRIL 2010



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Department of Public Works



**Schedule
Change**

Please note that the next Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting, previously scheduled for Thursday, April 22, 2010, has been changed to **Thursday, April 29, 2010**. The time (6:30 pm to 8:30 pm) and location (Hansen Yard, 10179 Glenoaks Blvd., Sun Valley, CA) remain the same.

The CAC meets in the Fall and Spring to provide an opportunity for the community to learn about the activities at the Big Tujunga Wash Mitigation Area. For more information on the CAC, please contact Valerie De La Cruz, LADPW, at (626) 458-6126.



What's All That Green Stuff??? Exotic Plant Eradication Program Continues

Have you noticed that there are areas with a lot of "green stuff" scattered around in the riparian area? The "green stuff" is applied on exotic or non-native plant species that are targeted for removal. The methods for exotic plant removal differ from plant to plant; some are cut while others receive a treatment of herbicide, which is the "green stuff" that can be seen in the riparian areas.

The purpose of exotic plant removal and eradication program at the Big Tujunga Mitigation Area is to eliminate the non-native plant species that outcompete the native plants for

essential resources (water, food, and sunlight). By removing the non-native, exotic plants, openings in the tree and shrub canopies are created where seedlings of the native plants can grow and flourish. As the native plants begin to fill in these openings, wildlife species will also benefit because there will be more food, cover, and nesting resources available. The exotic plant removal program is targeted at the riparian habitats in and around Haines Canyon Creek, Big Tujunga Wash, and the Tujunga ponds.

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ABOUT THE BIG TUJUNGA WASH MITIGATION AREA

The County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works' implementation of the Final Master Mitigation Plan for the Big Tujunga Wash Mitigation Area (Big T) has been under way since April 2000.

Big T is a parcel of land located in the City of Los Angeles' Sunland area (see Page 6). Big T covers an area of approximately 210 acres of sensitive habitat. The site was purchased by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works in 1998 for the purpose of compensating for habitat loss for other County of Los Angeles Public Works projects.

Big T protects one of the most rapidly -diminishing habitat types found in Southern California—willow riparian woodland. Big T is home to several protected species of fish (Santa Ana sucker, Santa Ana speckled dace, arroyo chub) and birds (least Bell's vireo, southwestern willow flycatcher).

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide an update of ongoing programs and to explain the upcoming enhancement measures that will be implemented on the site in the next few months. Newsletters will be published on a bi-annual basis (Spring and Fall).

More information can be found at <http://www.ladpw.org/wrd/facilities>

Exotic Plant Eradication Program Continues

(Continued from page 1)



Part of the restoration process involved herbicide treatment of exotic plants. Here, the stumps of castor bean are being treated to prevent re-growth.



Ornamental plants and trees, such as this fig, were removed during the restoration effort. Removing large-leaved exotic plants such as fig and castor bean opens up patches of light for native plants.



Eupatory was removed throughout Big T. Patches once dominated by this species are now available to native plants. This is especially evident along the banks of Haines Canyon Creek.

The actual removal and treatment of exotic plants began in late 2009. The primary exotic plant species targeted at the Big Tujunga Mitigation Area riparian areas during 2009 included giant reed, tamarisk, eupatory, castor bean, eupatory, and ash. Other species that were targeted include tree of heaven, tree tobacco, palm tree, and pepper tree.



Sometime during the early spring, the landscape contractor's crew and the biologist will be conducting another sweep through the riparian habitat to treat or remove the exotic plants that have re-sprouted. The landscape contractor's crews will also continue weeding activities in the upland oak/sycamore area near the Cottonwood entrance. It appears that the ongoing weeding efforts have allowed the native plants to thrive and to naturally recruit seedlings into the areas where the weeds were removed. ♪



(1) Giant reed (*Arundo donax*) removal in process. (2) Palm trees are not native and do not provide habitat for native birds. (3) Castor bean is a fast-growing exotic shrub that was targeted for removal. (4) *Arundo* cuttings being stacked away from trails.

2009 Trail Maintenance Day

The 5th and 6th Trail Maintenance Days were conducted on May 2 and November 14, 2009 respectively. The focus of the events was trash removal in the upland, riparian, and creek areas. Community volunteers, ECORP's biologists, and Los Angeles County Department of Public Works' (LADPW) staff attended the event. ECORP's biologists provided guidance and support during maintenance activities to ensure safety and protection for the threatened and sensitive fish in Haines Canyon Creek. Thanks to all that participated in this important effort.

It was decided during the Fall CAC meeting that the Annual Trail Maintenance Day would be moved from the Spring season to the Fall season to avoid impacts to nesting birds during the bird breeding season. Please look for the next Trail Maintenance Day event in our Fall 2010 newsletter or on our website (<http://www.ladpw.org/wrd/facilities>). 



(LEFT) Volunteer Terry Kaiser uses his horse to haul trash from Big T on Trail Maintenance Day. (Center) Volunteers Patricia Davenport (left) and Andrea Gutman (right) remove a blanket during Trail Maintenance Day. (Right) A cleaner Big T!

Announcements

- ◆ The next **Community Advisory Committee (CAC)** meeting is scheduled for Thursday, **April 29, 2010** from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm at Hansen Yard, 10179 Glenoaks Blvd., Sun Valley, CA.
- ◆ During your visit to Big T please watch out for **debris and garbage** brought by the recent rains. Parts of the trails were also flooded and eroded after the recent rains. Be careful!
- ◆ **It's breeding season at Big T!** This means that visitors must stay on trails and be careful not to disturb trees and shrubs, which may contain bird nests.
- ◆ **It's also fish breeding season!** Please tread lightly when crossing Haines Canyon Creek. Our three native fish (see 'Kid's Corner' on page 5) use the rocks and sand as nests, and baby fish like to aggregate over the sandy creek floor in shallow water.

Native Plant Profile: *Ceanothus*



Ceanothus shrubs are in full bloom at Big T! Look for them on the upland near the Cottonwood entrance. *Ceanothus* are native to North and Central America and belong to the buckthorn family Rhamnaceae. *Ceanothus* have evolved a symbiotic relationship with bacteria. The plant provides a home in the roots of the plant while the bacteria take nitrogen from the air and give it to the plant. The plant uses this nitrogen to make proteins, DNA, vitamins and hormones! Now that's a good exchange!

Results of Focused Sensitive Species Surveys

Arroyo Toad. Six focused surveys for arroyo toad were conducted in Haines Canyon Creek and the surrounding suitable riparian habitats during spring and early summer 2009. Daytime and nighttime surveys were conducted between April and June on days that had weather conducive to observing arroyo toads (new or partial moons, air temperature greater than 55°F). No eggs, larval, juvenile, or adult arroyo toads were observed.



Least Bell's Vireo. Eight focused surveys were conducted for least Bell's vireo in the riparian habitats at Big T from mid-April through mid-June. The surveys were conducted on foot through suitable habitat while listening for least Bell's vireo vocalizations and scanning the canopy (tree line) with binoculars to identify bird species. No least Bell's vireos were found during the surveys.



Southwestern Willow Flycatcher. Five focused surveys for southwestern willow flycatcher were conducted in suitable riparian habitat at Big T during the 2009 breeding season. Surveys were conducted during weather that was conducive to high levels of bird activity (i.e. no surveys were conducted during rain events, high winds, cold temperatures, etc.). No breeding or migratory southwestern willow flycatchers were observed during these surveys.



Post Station Fire Concerns



The Station Fire that began in late August 2009 stayed north of Interstate 210 (Foothill Freeway) and out of the Big T Mitigation Bank; however, there is a high potential for debris-laden flows because the Station Fire burned most of the watershed and the dam is being rehabilitated.

In addition, Haines Creek is in the trajectory of major debris flow and Highways 2 and 39 may become blocked. The threat of post fire damage (debris runoff, siltation of Big Tujung sensitive areas) will exist for the next three to five years.

Rain Warning!



Please do not visit Big T during rain events due to the high potential for debris flows from the Station Fire.

The LADPW is making an effort to maintain the upstream debris basins during this storm season and will continue to monitor flows and the basins in the coming years. Up to date information on fires, road closures, and post fire flood flow protection is available on the County Public Works website (www.ladpw.org) or by calling (800) 214-4020.



Public Outreach Effort Continues in the Big Tujunga Mitigation Area

In 2009 ECORP's biologists mounted an information and outreach campaign directed at Big Tujunga's visitor groups who picnic, hike, and recreate near the creek and ponds. LADPW and ECORP realized that an onsite outreach effort was needed to inform these visitor groups of the sensitive plants and animals that live within the Mitigation Area.

In order to reach out to a wide audience, ECORP and LADPW developed a bilingual (English and Spanish) information brochure that describes the reason for the Mitigation

Area, the sensitive natural resources, and the activities that are allowed in the Mitigation Area.

Regular outreach activities were conducted on numerous weekends during August and September of 2009. A bilingual ECORP biologist spoke to both the Spanish and English speaking visitors during these outreach sessions. The biologist received very positive feedback from most of the recreational users who were approached. Many expressed a genuine concern and appreciation for the Mitigation Area and its natural resources. Outreach may continue in 2010 so keep an eye out for biologists doing outreach! ♻️



Kid's Corner

Very important fish (V.I.F.) live in Big T!

Three very important species of fish call **Big T** their home. These three fish form a group called the "**South Coast Minnow-Sucker fish community**".

Why is this group so important? This group is found in only two places in the world. They live in the **San Gabriel River** and the other place is...you guessed it! **BIG T!**

Long ago this group was found in many rivers and streams in California. Today they are **so rare** that they are protected by law. This is why these three fish are **V.I.F.!**

Let's meet the V.I.F. First, we have the **Santa Ana sucker** (1), and it belongs to the sucker family. Its mouth is on the underside of the head. It uses its mouth like a vacuum to suck food off rocks and boulders. Next we have the **Santa Ana speckled dace** (2). It feeds on algae and insects that live around rocks and plants. Lastly, we have the **arroyo chub** (3). Arroyo means "stream" in Spanish and

chub refers to its thick body and chunky tail. It likes to eat algae, insects, and shrimp-like creatures. Dace and chubs belong to the minnow family. Together these three V.I.F. are called the South Coast Minnow-Sucker fish community!

These three fish live in Haines Canyon Creek. The creek is also very important because it is the only place at Big T where these three fish can live. So the best way to protect our V.I.F. is by not swimming in the creek and by not disturbing the creek. ♻️



South Coast
Minnow-Sucker
fish community





Water Resources Division
County of Los Angeles
Department of Public Works
900 S. Freemont Avenue
Alhambra, CA 91803



Where is Big T?

Downstream of Big Tujunga Canyon, right in the heart of Sun Valley south of the 210 freeway, you'll find a native riparian (water loving plant) natural area filled with cottonwoods, willows and pools of water that support many native aquatic species. Check out the Big T website for more information at:

<http://www.ladpw.org/wrd/facilities/>



Emergencies? Incidents? Questions?

- **CALL 911 TO REPORT ANY EMERGENCY SUCH AS FIRE OR ACCIDENT**
- Please **DO NOT** use 911 to report minor incidents or regulation infractions. Contact the Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD's) non-emergency number at (877) ASK LAPD or (877) 275-5273.
- In the case of an emergency situation (those where 911 is involved) please make a follow up call to the Department of Public Works as soon as possible at the numbers listed below.*
- Do not attempt to enforce regulations. Contact LAPD to handle the situation/incident.

* For emergency follow up or to report minor incidents, obtain information, or get questions answered during weekday work hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:50 p.m., Monday through Thursday**), please contact:

Belinda Kwan or Valerie De La Cruz
 Water Resources Division
 County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works
 900 S. Freemont Avenue
 Alhambra, CA 91803
 Phone: (626) 458-6135/(626) 458-6126
 Fax: (626) 979-5436
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** After work hours or on weekends, please contact the Department of Public Works at (626) 458-HELP.