

**Topanga Canyon Boulevard Roadside Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, May 15, 2013**  
**10:00am-12:30pm**  
**Topanga Library**

**Standing Members in Attendance:**

Susan Nissman – Yaroslavsky, Third Supervisorial District

Kara Seward – Pavley, SD27

Andrea Kune, Josh Kurpies – Bloom, AD50

Lauren Wonder, Jim Fowler, Fiona Nagle, Patrick Chandler, Ed Siribodhi, Gus Nunez – Caltrans (CT)

Roger Pugliese – Topanga Association for a Scenic Community (TASC)

Beth Burnam – North Topanga Canyon Fire Safe Council (NTCFSC)

James Grasso – Topanga Coalition for Emergency Preparedness (T-CEP)

Rosi Dagit, Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains (RCDSMM)

Joseph Rosendo – Topanga Chamber of Commerce

Ben Allanoff, Carrie Carrier- Topanga Creek Watershed Committee (TCWC)

**Other Attendees:**

Annemarie Donkin (Topanga Messenger); Bill Carrier (TCWC Member)

**I. Welcome:** Susan Nissman, Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Co-Chair

**A. Introductions**

**B. Approval of Minutes** – Minutes approved with multiple minor corrections/changes.

**II. Reports**

**A. Implementation Plan (IP) Review:** (began at 10:25am; ended at noon)

- Dan Freeman signed off on the plan. His signature is on the cover letter, which was read aloud to the group.
- Richard Bloom’s office will be one of the signatories to the Plan.
- Fiona Nagle took the lead in drafting the IP, with six others helping to draft it: Rosi, Tim, Ben, James, Carrie, Ed S.)
- Susan asked for confirmation that the original Watershed Plan text was incorporated into this document. Rosi indicated that it was included “verbatim”. It was also decided that a link would be included to the RCD website which houses the original Watershed Plan.
- Susan said that she is pushing for Public Works to adopt the TCB plan, since they’ve already adopted the San Gabriel and LA River Plans.
- Prior to this meeting, Fiona sent out the IP for review by the Committee. Irina sent back a few comments which Ben thought should not be included without further debate and discussion. Fiona agreed with Ben and noted that many of Irina’s comments were already addressed.
- The first correction to the IP: “Title Page” edit – “Topanga Canyon [Creek] Watershed Management Plan”.
- We reviewed the Table of Contents together. Fiona mentioned that she might omit the “References” section and simply incorporate citations/footnotes directly within the Plan.
- The text that is highlighted in **green** requires discussion on how to proceed.
  - i. **BMP Tiers** - We reviewed the BMP Tiers on page 10. There was some discussion, at the meeting and afterward, about potentially adding permeable concrete/minor concrete to Tier 2 or 3 of the BMPs. This requires more discussion. We need more info from Ed S. in order to complete the BMP matrix. (Also, I believe that “grill blade” should be written as “gorilla blade”).
  - ii. **Native plants** - We also reviewed the native plants list, which totaled 8: 3 grasses and 5 perennials (an additional plant, sticky monkey flower, was added after this meeting, bringing the total to nine).
  - iii. **Strategies for Implementation** – page 11. There was some discussion of “sensitive areas”. These are detailed in Appendix C, p. 27 of the draft IP. Fiona opined that it might be best for

the community to oversee and/or take responsibility for these spot areas along the Boulevard. These areas all need to be mowed/maintained after June 30<sup>th</sup> (frog mating season). Rosi noted that all the areas that Fiona had marked in green were State Parks properties. Susan mentioned that she and Rosi had been in regular contact with State Parks reps, Suzanne Goode (Senior Resource Ecologist) and Jamie King (Environmental Scientist). Roger asked whether it mattered if State Parks was made aware of this or not. Rosi thought it best to notify/include them as these sensitive areas are “outstanding issues that were never properly addressed.” Rosi wants to institutionalize the practice of giving the frogs “a little more time” before their habitat is disturbed during the annual Spring vegetation clearance period.

- **Annual March Meeting** - Susan and Kara both suggested staking the sensitive areas with flags or similar. Fiona said that the main problem with staking was that the stakes/flags would be removed if they were planted too early. It was decided that whether or not to stake, as well as timing issues, would be decided each year in March. We shall discuss these issues for next year in March 2014.
- **Community involvement vs. CT only in “sensitive areas”** - Ben asked if it was even efficient for Caltrans to involve community members in caring for these “sensitive areas” if they had to close the roads for these spots anyway (due to where they’re located-the nature of the roads).

Rosi added that she thought it might be best for Caltrans to do it since she thought the area might need special equipment, like a “Bush Hog”(?) or “vac”(?). She estimated that it would take CT roughly half a day to clear vegetation up to MM (PM) 2.5. Susan mentioned that Dan would probably be okay with that.

Fiona said that a community liaison was needed. Ben volunteered to serve in this role. Roger volunteered to be his alternate. Ben thought that we should also recruit more community volunteers trained in landscaping.

CT said that they are confident that they can observe the timing requirements but they want to make sure they do it right. Rosi said that CT has typically done a good job on these areas in the past once shown what to do. James asked if CT could clear-cut the area. Rosi said that would mostly be okay as long as they did not pull out the roots.

PM/MM 7.8-7.9 – Rosi said that drainage under the oaks was no longer an issue. It could be taken off the list.

PM/MM 9.9-10.1 – Rosi said that a regular mower could now be used here. It can also be taken off the “sensitive” list.

- **Community involvement in “non sensitive areas”** – Rosi noted that CT does not need to do MM/PM area 5.4-5.6 (where Humboldt lilies are under the oaks). We’ll approach property owners about this area.

We proceeded to the “Community-related Delivery Mechanisms for BMPs” section on page 12. This prompted a discussion about how and when to communicate road clearance efforts to the community.

- **Communications to the Community** – It was ultimately decided that we would adopt a two-pronged approach to communications: (1) Issue a general notification to the community at the beginning of the season; and (2) Send out media alerts when traffic controls/lane closures are needed. Susan asked CT to send these alerts to the Committee members and asked that they restrict their announcements to only actions related to brush clearance (not other road maintenance issues). Committee members can then send out these notices to the people in their groups.

Ideally, we would send out alerts as far as two weeks in advance (which is the required lead time for many papers), but since that is not always possible, we will aim for “as much

notice as possible”.

Fiona summarized the consensus on this topic as follows: First, the Committee will be notified “in advance” of work. Second, Communications to the community will be coordinated by the Committee.

- **Annual Timeframe** – Ben and Roger thought that we should add the caveat, “Unless conditions dictate otherwise...” to the timing of work described in the IP.

Jim added that he wanted to have the flexibility to phase things in appropriately. He also wanted to know if aesthetics issues, such as color, could torpedo the use of something like weed mats if they became available. For instance, if he is able to acquire or purchase weed mats in June/July when he gets a new budget, would he be able to go ahead and buy them for this project? Susan and Fiona replied that the BMP Subcommittee would be reconvening in June to discuss weed mats further. The BMP group will discuss the size of the area to potentially be piloted with weed mats.

Ed warned that money issues can also dictate timing. As such, he wanted a caveat added to the “Timeline” section for that.

Andrea and Kara brought up the issue of years with increased fire risk. In those years, the risk becomes acute as early as May. As such, we may need to try to speed up brush clearance to a May deadline. A caveat should be added to this section mentioning that adaptive management of timing is needed to mitigate fire risk.

- **Adaptive Management (AM)** – On that note, we segued to the section on “AM”. In the IP, Fiona proposed that monitoring (i.e. on-the-ground assessments of the effectiveness of BMPs and vegetation conditions) be performed on a trimester basis. She suggested the following schedule: *January* (to look at the project); *June* (to evaluate using standard CT tools, such as its erosion assessment); and *September* (to assess and report?). Fiona noted that the June and September assessments would be performed in conjunction with fire inspections.

In addition, Fiona proposed that the TCBRC meet quarterly to review and evaluate the CT assessments on the following schedule: *January, March* (later decided that this would be “end of March/beginning of April), *June*, and *September*. Proposed adjustments to the vegetation maintenance plan would be decided in the Committee.

- **Table 2: 5 Year Timeline** - Fiona then called our attention to the “5 Year Timeline” table. Every five years, a new 5-year plan will be adopted. She suggests doing a mid-cycle plan review in 2015. Then, in 2017, she suggests beginning the discussion of the next 5-year plan. Then, by 2018, a new plan will be in place.
- **Miscellaneous** – We need an online home. It was agreed that Caltrans, the Topanga Town Council (One Topanga), and RCD would all put the document (or a link to it) on their websites. Fiona put out a call for references for those whose sections required research. Fiona also asked for a full list of Mapping Committee members. She requested that a final set of maps be emailed to her (Ed and Rosi said they would finalize). From the BMP subcommittee, she asked that the Word matrix be converted to an Excel matrix. It was agreed that Bill Carrier (member of the BMP Subcommittee) would do that. Fiona said that she would reach out to certain individuals for help with Appendix E: the Evaluation Framework for Implementation. For Appendix H, Fiona mentioned needing a full list of Communication Subcommittee members.
- **Signing** – It was agreed that we would postpone signing until July so that each group’s representative could bring the IP to their membership for review. Fiona will implement the changes we suggested today and will circulate an updated version to the Committee by some point in June.

## B. Communication Subcommittee

The logo was finalized and approved by the Subcommittee.

- Lauren discussed branding and sub-messaging. We're focusing on the concepts of preserving and enhancing the natural landscape.
- For taglines, Lauren suggested: "Do it Topanga-style," and "Act like you live here."
- Lauren passed around a press release template to be used for future communications related to this project. It has a very professional look, with all the participating organizations listed alongside the left-hand side. Ben noted that "Canyon" should be changed to "Creek" for the Topanga Creek Watershed Committee.
- There was discussion about trying to issue the press release by Topanga Days (which coincide with Memorial Day weekend).
- It was suggested that all the participating organization do things such as write "letters to the editor" and describe it in terms that will resonate with your audience (ideally using the sub-messages described above) once the press release is issued.
- The next Communication Subcommittee meeting is June 11.

**C. Evaluation Framework** – we ran out of time and did not explicitly cover this as a discrete section.

**D. Mapping Subcommittee** – we ran out of time and did not explicitly cover this as a discrete section.

**E. Best Management Practices Subcommittee** - we ran out of time and did not explicitly cover this as a discrete section.

**F. Discussion re: Merging Mapping & BMP Subcommittee into one Implementation Subcommittee** - we ran out of time and did not explicitly cover this as a discrete section.

### III. Next Steps

#### A. Action Items:

- Set meeting time for next BMP Subcommittee meeting (June 5th)
- Fiona will finalize the IP and circulate to the group.
- The organizations participating in the TCBRC will review the IP with a view toward signing it in July.

#### B. Future Agenda Items:

- Final Committee approval and signing of IP

#### C. Meeting Schedule (Committee and Subcommittee)

1. BMP Meeting: June 5th
2. Communication Meeting: June 10th.
3. Next TCBRC Meeting: tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 10am-noon, Topanga Library

### IV. Member Announcements

### V. Adjournment

**VI. Group Photo** – completed.