

**SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Minutes of August 1, 2025**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jeremy Blakespear
Rich Risner
Kelly Clemshaw
Udo Wahn
Jeff Carmel
Liz Gabrych
Dorothy McLin
Don Wendt
Victoria Touchstone
Jeremy Blakespear
Beatrice Darimont
Matt Cunningham
Julie Klein
Pam Heatherington
Jim Smith
Kristina Leyva
Neil Meyer

REPRESENTING

Acting Chair, SD Bicycle Coalition
American Society of Architects
Del Dios Town Council
Del Mar Lagoon Committee
Friends of the San Dieguito River Valley
League of Women Voters
Lomas Serenas Property Owners
Ramona Trails
Rancho Bernardo Planning Board
San Diego Bicycle Coalition
San Diego Bird Alliance
San Diego Mountain Biking Assoc.
San Diego Trails Alliance
Sierra Club
Torrey Pines Community Planning Group
Coastal Property Owner
Eastern Property Owner

VISITORS/STAFF PRESENT

Shawna Anderson
Dewanda Vandermost
Nathan Lacy
John Degenfelder

San Dieguito River Park JPA
San Dieguito River Park JPA
San Dieguito River Park JPA
Ramona Trails, Alt

Roll Call and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 10:32 AM by acting Chair Jeremy Blakespear, filling in for Chair Chris Khoury and Vice Chair Jeff Barnow, both of whom were out of town.

Jeff Carmel introduced himself as a representative from the Friends of San Dieguito River Valley.

Approval of Minutes – 6-6-25

A correction was noted regarding the Interpretation Committee report: Replace “No Report” with “Did not meet since June CAC meeting”. Pam Heatherington moved to approve the minutes of June 6, 2025 and Neil Meyer seconded the motion.

All members were in favor.

Abstain: None

Chair’s Report –

Acting Chair Blakespear shared the sad news of Maggie Brown’s passing – CAC member and President of the Friends of the SDRV. He expressed his condolences and spoke of Maggie’s long-standing contributions and agreeable nature, even during disagreements.

Several members shared memories and tributes for Maggie Brown, highlighting her fountain of knowledge about the San Dieguito River Park and the possibility of a memorial bench in honor of Maggie installed at the River Park. Another member noted that Maggie's friends are planning a memorial event for her in the fall and encouraged interested members to reach out after the meeting.

Executive Director's Report – Executive Director Anderson provided the following updates:

Fishing Line Receptacle Installation

A new fishing line receptacle has been installed at the San Dieguito Lagoon near the Grand Avenue Bridge, in the designated fishing area. The receptacle was designed, installed, and will be maintained by WILDCOAST, an international non-profit organization with a local office in Del Mar. The receptacle is part of a program supported by California Clean and Green, led by State Parks and the California Coastal Commission. Hooks and lines collected will be recycled.

The area will continue to be monitored by the community due to ongoing issues with litter and rule violations, such as fishing outside designated hours and areas. New signage has been installed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to reinforce regulations.

Educational Signage and Online Resources

The fishing receptacle includes signage with WILDCOAST's website, which links to maps and information about the San Dieguito Lagoon State Marine Conservation Area. This aims to better inform the public about the area's regulations and conservation efforts.

Potential Petition Regarding Fishing Area

The Lagoon Committee is considering a petition to modify the designated fishing area. This would be a lengthy and potentially controversial process, and further action will depend on whether current issues persist.

Grant from the Del Mar Foundation

The JPA recently received a grant from the Del Mar Foundation to fund two interpretive panels at the Grand Avenue Bridge. One panel will replace an existing one and the other will be new, focusing on the Kumeyaay people.

Coast to Crest Trail Video Project

In partnership with the Conservancy, short educational video clips are being produced to highlight the status of the Coast to Crest Trail, efforts to close trail gaps, and how the public can support the initiative. These videos will be featured at the River Valley Fest and posted online.

Ranger Training Retreat

Two interpretive rangers, Leana and Calei, attended a weekend training retreat in the Santa Cruz Mountains, sponsored by State Parks as part of the Outdoor Equity Grant program.

Volunteer Recognition

Longtime volunteer Terry Weeks, a member of the Dust Devils, was recently featured in the San Diego Union-Tribune in a column about retirees.

Outdoor Safety Training Event

An outdoor safety training session will be held at the end of the month near the Birdwing Open Air Classroom at the Lagoon.

EcoLogik Presentation and Ranger-Led Hike

Following the successful presentation by EcoLogik at the last meeting, a follow-up event is scheduled for August 9 at the Rancho Bernardo Community Center. The event will include a Ranger-led hike and lunch, with EcoLogik providing another presentation.

Autumn Harvest Tea at Sikes Adobe

Due to the popularity of the Valentine's Tea held earlier this year, a new seasonal event, the Autumn Harvest Tea, will be held on November 15 and 16 at Sikes Adobe.

Artisan Fair at Sikes Adobe

In response to the discontinuation of the farmers market at Sikes Adobe, an Artisan Fair is being planned for December 7. The fair will feature local artists and craftspeople. Those who know artists working in jewelry, textiles, woodwork, home décor, or other crafts are encouraged to share the flyer and contact Interpretive Ranger Leana Bulay for participation details.

Public Comment – None

DISCUSSION/ACTION

1. Potential Termination of Open Space Easement Grant Deed on Polo Fields

Acting Chair Jeremy Blakespear introduced the item, providing background on the City of San Diego's proposal to remove deed restrictions on the open space easement grant on City owned property known as the Polo Fields and Fairbanks Ranch Country Club.

Key points included:

In 1983, approximately 600 acres of open space were granted in association with the Fairbanks Ranch development, with restrictions limiting use to recreational purposes.

For several decades part of the City open space property was leased to RSF Polo Club, and in 2016, the City signed a new lease with Surf Cup Sports, which significantly increased the intensity of use often in violation of the deed restrictions.

The "Fairbanks Polo Club Homes" Homeowners Association filed a lawsuit against the City of San Diego and Surf Cup Sports, alleging violations of the deed restrictions, including excessive use and non-compliance with permitted activities.

The City of San Diego is now considering a proposal to remove the deed restrictions, potentially rendering the lawsuit moot. This proposal is expected to appear on the City Council's agenda in September.

Blakespear noted that the Joint Powers Authority (JPA) Board voted at their July 18 2025 meeting unanimously opposing the City's proposal to remove the deed restrictions and approved a letter opposing the removal of the deed restrictions. While no action is required by the CAC at this time, he suggested the CAC consider a motion to support the JPA's position.

Executive Director Anderson provided additional context:

The subject property is located in the heart of the San Dieguito River Park Focused Planning Area and includes a critical segment of the Coast to Crest Trail, linking Horse Park to the Osuna segment and ultimately to the future San Dieguito Road CTC Pathway. The area is vital for both open space preservation and public trail access.

The deed restrictions stem from the Fairbanks Ranch Country Club Specific Plan adopted by the San Diego City Council in 1982. The plan designated the open space areas as permanent recreational and natural open space in exchange for development rights for surrounding residential areas.

The approximately 600 acres was deeded by developer Watt Industries to the City of San Diego with strict land use restrictions.

The area includes the Fairbanks Ranch Country Club (south of San Dieguito Road) and the Polo Fields (north of the river), now leased to Surf Cup Sports.

Despite being public open space, access is limited. The golf course is private, and the soccer fields are not officially open to the public. Surf Cup Sports agreed to complete trail improvements as part of their lease, but progress has stalled due to the absence of a timeline requirement.

The only current public access is a narrow strip of land along the river, approximately 14 to 30 feet wide.

Anderson emphasized that while the Coast to Crest Trail itself is covered by separate permits and agreements, the surrounding open space environment is at risk. The proposal to remove deed restrictions could significantly impact the trail experience and long-term conservation goals.

Member Discussion and Recommendations:

CAC members voiced concerns about the City's proposal to remove the deed restrictions including the fact that the City committed to preserve the open space with the clear intent to be permanent.

Public safety concerns were highlighted, particularly the increased traffic and lack of evacuation planning. The surrounding roads are narrow and rural, and recent emergencies have demonstrated the area's vulnerability. Members recommended that public safety be included in formal communications to the City.

Senate Bill 1425 was discussed as a potential legislative avenue. The bill requires cities and counties to align land use and open space planning with environmental and equity goals by January 1, 2026.

To strengthen advocacy, members proposed coordinated outreach including letters from member organizations, attendance at the Council hearing, and engagement with community stakeholders and media.

Members agreed on the importance of unified action and encouraged all represented organizations to participate.

Jeremy Blakespear made a motion that the CAC strongly support the JPA Board position opposing the City of San Diego's proposal to remove the open space easement grant deed restrictions. The motion was seconded by Liz Gabrych.

All members were in favor.

Abstain: None

2. Update on Coast to Crest Trail at Horsepark (Oral report)

Executive Director Anderson reported that the HorsePark segment of the Coast to Crest Trail has officially reopened following repairs to a 20-foot washout caused by stormwater overflow from a detention basin on the HorsePark property. Repairs were completed by JPA Park Rangers and volunteers, funded by HITS. Adjacent riverbank areas are being replanted.

Anderson reported that JPA staff is working with 22nd Agricultural District staff on a plan to repair the drainage culvert that caused one of the trail bridges to sink as the bridge foundation was

undermined by erosion from the culvert. A temporary 3-foot-wide detour around the bridge has been installed to enable the trail to be reopened to the public. Engineering assessments and cost evaluations are ongoing.

A safety concern was raised by a CAC member about the potential for a cyclist to miss the A-frame sign and posts across the drainage culvert and potentially ride into the ditch. and suggested that horizontal caution tape be added. Executive Director Anderson agreed to follow up with the appropriate manager.

3. Committee Reports

Project Review Committee – The committee met on July 21 to discuss key items, focusing on the Surf Cup Sports Complex and related concerns. The committee also reviewed a proposed modified use permit by Rancho Guejito Winery to expand its facilities with new tasting rooms and event spaces. CAC Members raised questions about the winery’s environmental practices, particularly waste management, and encouraged sustainable reuse. It was confirmed that the winery’s owners also own the surrounding hillside property and are considered responsible land stewards.

There were no updates on the LOSSAN rail alignment.

The committee currently has five active members. With Maggie’s passing and another member not attending regularly, additional volunteers are needed. Interested members were encouraged to contact Executive Director Anderson or Nathan. Meetings are held monthly, typically on the third Monday at 10:30 AM, alternating between the JPA Headquarters off Hidden Valley Road and the Lagoon Ranger Station.

Trails Committee – The committee did not meet recently. A tentative meeting is scheduled for August 5th at 11:00 AM, that may be rescheduled.

Interpretation Committee –

Liz Gabrych reported that a subcommittee of the Interpretation Committee is focused on reviewing and updating the educational panels in the Mule Hill area.

The goal is to revise existing panels to present a more balanced and inclusive historical narrative. The next committee meeting is scheduled for August 19.

INFORMATION

Horsepark Trail Repairs (oral report) – covered under Discussion Item 2.

Osuna Trail Segment of CTC Trail (oral report) - No report

Correspondence – None

Acting Chair Blakespear adjourned the meeting at 11:39 am.