

**SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Minutes of November 7, 2025**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jeff Barnouw
Trista Garcia Silva
Bob Byrnes
Candice Bowman
Kelly Clemshaw
Udo Wahn
Polly Wheatley
Adrienne Brown
Liz Gabrych
Dorothy McLin
Victoria Touchstone
Jeremy Blakespear
Beatrice Darimont
Jennifer Disser
Julie Klein
Pam Heatherington
Jim Smith
Kristina Leyva
Bill Adelson
Neil Meyer

REPRESENTING

Vice Chair, Coastal Property Owner
American Society of Architects
California Native Plant Society
Carmel Valley Planning Board
Del Dios Town Council
Del Mar Lagoon Committee
Friends of the San Dieguito River Valley
Lake Hodges Native Plant Club
League of Women Voters
Lomas Serenas Property Owners
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
Eastern Property Owner

VISITORS/STAFF PRESENT

Shawna Anderson
Dewanda Vandermost
Nathan Lacy
Frederique Duranton

San Dieguito River Park JPA
San Dieguito River Park JPA
San Dieguito River Park JPA
Del Mar Lagoon Committee, Alt

Roll Call and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 10:32 AM by Vice Chair Barnouw. A roll call was taken with 20 committee members present to begin the meeting.

Approval of Minutes – 8-1-25

No amendments or changes were needed for the draft minutes. Kristina Leyva made the motion to approve the minutes and Neil Meyer seconded the motion.

All members were in favor.

Abstain: None

Chair's Report - No report. Vice Chair Barnouw adjusted the agenda to allow Committee Reports to present first, as the Executive Director's arrival was delayed; the Executive Director's report followed afterward.

1. Committee Reports

Project Review Committee – The PRC met in November to review current proposed projects. Project updates included the Rancho Guejito Winery major use permit modification, which remains on hold while Nathan gathers additional information. The Pioneer Sports Complex project proposed on Via de la Valle is under review by the City's Development Services Department. Surf Cup owns the parcel along Via de la Valle adjacent to the soccer lease. The City of Del Mar is working on a Living Levee and Lagoon Shoreline Protection Feasibility Study, primarily to address sea level rise, and Nathan will obtain more details for committee review.

Other business included plans for the committee to review and potentially update the design and development guidelines in Appendix D of the SDRP Concept Plan as its next task.

Trails Committee – Candy Bowman and Jennifer Disser presented preliminary results from the Trails Committee's recent trail survey along several segments of the CTC Trail, noting higher user counts than in 2024 due to normal weather conditions (not a heat advisory as in 2024) and adjusted collection times. Lake Hodges Kreitzer Bridge remains the busiest location, followed by Lagoon and Volcan Mountain. Observations included increased e-bike use (mostly Class 1 pedal-assist), continued popularity among hikers and dog walkers, and newer uses of the trails, such as electric unicycles. No equestrian activity was recorded during the surveys. Future trail surveys will be postponed until additional trail segments are open, as sufficient data has been collected on the currently accessible trails.

The committee also conducted a field visit on November 4th to evaluate alternative locations for the **Hubbell SDRP Western Gateway** project. The original site near the railroad bridge is currently in flux due to several changing conditions such as the Del Mar Living Levee project and LOSSAN realignment project, that jeopardize the ability to construct the Gateway by the grant deadline of December 2026. The committee assessed two alternative sites for the future Gateway either temporarily or permanently, one overlooking the restored wetlands near Jimmy Durante Blvd. and the other near the Lagoon Ranger Station. The committee members present preferred the Lagoon Ranger Station location for its strong visibility, scenic views, and land ownership by the JPA, making it a practical option. The committee emphasized the need to finalize a site and proceed with construction before the grant deadline.

Interpretation Committee –

Liz Gabrych reported that the committee did not meet last month. At a previous meeting, members conducted a field review of signage at Mule Hill and discussed strategies for improving interpretation of the site's historical events. It was noted that existing signs are deteriorated and largely unreadable; these will be replaced as part of the planned updates.

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

The San Dieguito River Park Watershed Explorers Program received an honorable mention and a \$5,000 award at the *All In 4 Change* ceremony sponsored by Harrah's Resort.

Upcoming events include the first Harvest Tea at Sikes Adobe on November 15–16, following the success of the Valentine's Tea.

The Jan and Bob Fuchs commemorative bench has been installed at the Tidal Trail, with native plant landscaping planned.

The 22nd Agricultural District installed a new bench and shade structure overlooking their restored wetlands near Jimmy Durante Boulevard as part of Coastal Commission mitigation requirements.

Southern California Edison continues mitigation efforts, planting over 38,000 native plants near the Birdwing.

The faded San Pasqual Agricultural Preserve sign has been replaced through coordination with Councilmember Von Wilpert.

Public Comment – None

DISCUSSION/ACTION

2. Polo Fields Recap

JPA staff provided a summary of the San Diego City Council meeting held October 27 regarding their proposed action to terminate the grant deed land use restrictions on the Polo Fields property. The Council approved terminating the land use restrictions and amending their lease with Surf Cup to resolve ongoing litigation. Key outcomes include:

- A June 2027 deadline for completing and opening the Coastal Crest Trail along the lease area.
- An annual \$100,000 payment from Surf Cup to the City's Parks and Recreation Opportunity Fund, supporting underserved communities (none of the funds go to the River Park).
- Adjustments to lease payments and confirmation that Surf Cup will provide a trail update at the JPA Board meeting on November 14.

Executive Director Anderson and JPA Board Chair and Solana Beach Councilmember Jill MacDonald emphasized during their testimony at the Council hearing that the JPA is not opposed to soccer but is concerned about the loss of environmental protections on the property and the lack of a buffer between the sensitive habitat and intense Surf Cup activities, including runoff, light pollution, and noise that disrupts the wildlife corridor and that the land use protections would no longer apply. Anderson also stated the JPA's desire to pursue long-term strategies to ensure the property is used for public open space such as rezoning the property from AR-1-2 (residential) to open space and advocating for permanent parkland dedication.

CAC members expressed other concerns including:

- **Public Access Issues:** Locked gates and new fencing despite signage promising daily access; lease terms allow closures during events, but closures outside events were noted as problematic.

- **Environmental Concerns:** Potential fertilizer use, water quality impacts, and lack of required mitigation measures. Members suggested partnering with Coastkeeper or Surfrider for water testing.
- **Economic Argument:** Need to reframe the value of parks and open space as tourism drivers to counter Surf Cup's economic claims.
- **Future Risks:** Concern that multiple future leases could complicate enforcement and further threaten the river valley.
- **Legal Strategy:** CAC member Kristina Leyva (Coastal Property Owner) explained that there is a court injunction filing on January 16, 2026 and potential grounds for challenging the legality of terminating deed restrictions and exempting intensification from CEQA per her discussion with the HOA representatives.

3. Two new Habitat Management Areas (Oral report)

Executive Director Anderson reported that two additional habitat management areas have been added under JPA stewardship. These properties serve as long-term mitigation sites for development projects outside the River Park and include endowments to support ongoing management.

- **Sycamore Westridge Preserve (Poway):** Part of the larger Sycamore Creek Preserve near JPA headquarters, this site includes conservation easements established through U.S. Navy mitigation projects. It supports coastal sage scrub habitat and species such as the California gnatcatcher, quail, and bobcat. Sycamore Creek is a tributary and wildlife corridor connecting to the San Dieguito River. Initial funding and an endowment will support surveys and restoration.
- **Caltrans I-5 Mitigation Preserve (Lagoon):** Located adjacent to the W-19 SANDAG lagoon restoration site near the Interstate 5, this coastal sage scrub habitat was restored by Caltrans and has met all mitigation requirements for impacts related to freeway improvements. Ownership and management responsibilities will be transferred to the JPA in early 2026 and an endowment was provided to JPA for long-term stewardship.

INFORMATION

Horsepark Trail Repairs (oral report) - No report

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

Correspondence – None

Vice Chair Barnouw adjourned the meeting at 12:10 pm.