

Ruffin Canyon Enhancement Planning

Notes, Workshop 2

November 30, 2016, 6:00pm to 8:00pm

Mission Valley Library, 2133 Fenton Pkwy, San Diego, CA 92108



Stakeholder Attendees

San Diego Canyonlands- Eric Bowlby, Executive Director; Lauren Kahal –RECON Environmental Volunteer/Note taker

City of San Diego- Jason Allen, Senior Open Space Ranger

Ruffin Canyon Stakeholders

Kevin Johnston
Kathleen Ford
Geraldyn White
Cindy Moore
Monica Fuentes
Tom Leech
John Raifsnider
Mary Johnson
Anna Johnston
Kyle Johnston

Nancy Barnhart
Lois Lippold
Phil Ovellette
Kerry Prterfield
Brad Savarr
Pat Herron
Paula Rothschild
Shirley Willadson
Mike Fennell

1. Introductory Comments & CEP Process:

- 5 residents of the Escala neighborhood joined

2. Opportunities and Constraints

- Eric gave an overview of the constraints in Ruffin Canyon – users, Escala HOA parcel, cobble stone bottom used by utility access roads for maintenance purposes, (too rough, not a suitable trail for hikers) etc.

3. Stakeholder Introductions and Brief Comments

- Taft Middle School – ADA access inside around perimeter of Taft School sports field and vista point with views of canyon will be included in a “joint use” park project in collaboration with the City and the San Diego Unified School District.
 - Concern over the stage included in the school district’s plan – amplified sound can have an adverse affect on sensitive species and nesting birds such as the California gnatcatcher.
 - Mitigation for noise? Might not be necessary given the low frequency of performances to be held at the stage, and that the location is already used for performances with a temporary stage facility.
 - Some stakeholders said the stage would be a community asset and the stage is not part of the CEP efforts
- Connect Sandrock Canyon to Ruffin
- Trails need to be safer for hikers, not as steep, safer, more established.
- After rain, the portion of the trail that runs through the creek bottom is very mucky – impossible to walk through

- Prioritize restoration, native plant species, bees
- Portion of trail through/around the Escala HOA property:
 - Most Escala residents in attendance voiced support for a trail that provided more convenient and safe access to the canyon.
 - Public access through Escala is a concern to some residents. Potential to bring transients, more vehicular traffic through the neighborhood because they want to keep the concept of a gated community.
 - One Escala resident said “use of canyon trails = sense of community. Ruffin Canyon is resource for residents of both the Serra Mesa and Mission Valley communities.”
 - Outreach to bring more people to the canyon would make thing safer in the canyon.
 - Kevin Johnston said Friends of Ruffin Canyon conducted outreach within the pedestrian easement at Escala from 2013 – 2016, informing residents about the possibility of a trail and almost all were in favor of a safe, convenient trail.
 - A possible realignment of the easement was discussed:
 - Look into an easement to the west and/or to the east of the existing easement that is out of the floodplain/wetland area
 - Need to avoid Fig Tree Park in Escala, but there is a narrow, strip of land on the slope well below the park that could be used to connect a trail to the paved access road at the current trailhead
 - Would need to be a well-engineered trail to control erosion
 - Time limit of use of trail through Escala proposed, dawn to dusk
 - Removal of homeless encampments on the San Diego River could bring more transients up Ruffin Canyon
 - Who would maintain the trail on Escala property?
 - Escala already maintains the trail within their property, as does Portofino through the bottom portion of the canyon trail.
 - Ruffin Friends Group, San Diego Canyonlands volunteers and programs
- Could we do more outreach to Escala residents?
 - Potential for members of the Atna community at Penasquitos Canyon could testify about the trailhead in their community?
 - Help them to realize that engineered trails would be better than existing
 - Assure that a through trail would likely not bring large numbers of people and does not mean additional vehicle access within Escala;
 - Benefit of Friends of Canyons groups as neighborhood watchdogs, and as stewards for keeping canyon clean and free of invasive species
 - Restoration work such as removing non-native pepper trees can help reduce potential for homeless encampments b/c removes cover
 - Nearby access to open space can increase property values
- Create an Escala arm of the Friends of Ruffin Canyon group
- Sandrock Canyon – could there be an official public access easement from the SDG&E

property (most of the canyon is owned by SDG&E)

- Use trail here currently runs through the creek bed/wetland
- Form a Friends of San Rock Canyon group
- Site a trail so that there is through-connectivity to the commercial district at the top of Shawn Canyon
- Outreach to neighbors regarding what native species to plant on portions of their property that are within/adjacent to canyons
 - Need to keep defensible space/brush management requirements in mind
- No stakeholders voiced any problem with San Diego Canyonlands potentially using a helicopter to remove non-native palm trees, except for one stakeholder indicated they are pretty
- **Next Meeting & Stakeholder Field Trips**
 - **Next meeting will be a field visit, February 25th, 9:00am to 11:30am meeting at the Shawn Avenue cal-d-sac where a trail leads into Ruffin Canyon. Consultant will attend.**
 - Stakeholder requested San Diego Canyonlands bring a consultant to discuss appropriate citing of the trail with regards to erosion on steep slopes.