

Working Draft for the Florida Canyon Enhancement Project (FCEP)

This draft proposal takes full advantage of the decades of study that have been devoted to defining the purpose, use, restoration and preservation of the 150 acres Florida Canyon Native Plant Preserve.

A thorough reading of past histories and policy papers gve been distilled below under "History".

History:

- It was widely felt that nine of the Pueblo lots (1,440 acres) could be designated as City Park in 1868.
- From 1872-1881 these 1,400 acres (before the ink was dry, two city councilmen cut a deal with a developer to sell off forty acres) were referred to as the "Reserved Wilderness".
- By 1873 keen insight by city leaders had added reservoirs, a quarry, and a city dump. Even a gunpowder magazine was authorized in this "wilderness".
- Kate Sessions, the first woman to graduate from UC Berkley (1887-1891) with a science (Botany) degree, came to San Diego in 1883. She leased 32 acres from the city near Upas and 6th Streets, for ten years for the nominal rent of 300 ornamental trees, 100 park trees and plants starting in 1897.
- Kate Session is famous for saying: "A fifty cent plant need a five dollar hole."
- In 1902 George White Marston put up \$10,000 so the Park Commission could hire Samuel H. Parsons, Jr., landscape architect for the City of New York; his plan called for preserving the "natural wilderness" and its vistas.
- In 1910, in anticipation of hosting the Pan-American Exposition in 1915, City Park was renamed Balboa Park in honor of Spanish-born Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, the first European to spot the Pacific Ocean while on exploration in Panama.
- On July 25, 1989, the City Council adopted the Balboa Park Master Plan and kept Florida Canyon as a designated "nature preserve", specifically setting forth "The native chaparral should be preserved for horticultural and botanical interests" and the area used for passive recreation.

The policy of "benign neglect" and its ramifications:

Let's face up to the first issue affecting Florida Canyon and reach consensus. Have we as citizens, followed the original intent of our founding fathers for city Park a.k.a Balboa Park? We have had enlightened leaders like Marsh, Scripps Sessions, Nash and the Olmstead Brothers articulate the intent of the founding fathers BUT! Commercial interests interceded and we got two expositions, a high school, a blind Center, a zoo, and a middle School to name a few of the perceived elements of the "city commons" needed for a healthy citizenry.

And we got a dump, a stone and sand quarry, a gun powered storage magazine, and a freeway, to name a few of the "negative externalities" of grapping cheap (centrally located and "ugly chaparral) for the glory of the "crown jewel of San Diego". a remnant of the original promise remains. And that remnant has been loved to death and past recognition as to its purpose. Its purpose was to b a wilderness where people could have a "mind/body" experience before the concept was even fleshed out in the popular nomenclature of the time. But it is vitally understood and desperately needed now.

So let us identify issues we must address, with a keen eye on the gargantuan issue of climate control and a green sustainable environment and "the land ethic"¹

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I want use to keep the following admonitions of Aldo Leopold at the center of our discussions and the ultimate recommendation of our committee:

- (1) That land is not merely soil,
- (2) That the native plants and animals kept the energy circuit open; others may or may not.
- (3) That man-made changes are of a different order than evolutionary changes, and have effects more comprehensive than is intended or foreseen.

And we must make amends to First Americans (the Kumeyaay) and acknowledge their expertise in living in harmony and sustainably in southern California.

What practices must Stop in Florida Canyon:

We must recognize that Florida Canyon is the last remnant of the beating heart of "city park" and will be the poster child of "San Diego's Crown Jewel". It is all that is what is left of the dedicated and designated "reserved wilderness" and has been specifically proscribed as "... preserved for horticultural and botanical interests" and the area used for passive recreation."

Therefore,

- (1.) No structures should be introduced into the boundaries of the preserve (support uses like parking lots, kiosk, restrooms shall be located adjacent to but not one the native plant preserve), and
- (2.) No new drainage structures or conveyances shall be placed in Florida Canyon except as to address offsite "outlaw water", and
- (3.) There shall be no roadways or widening of roadways within the Florida Canon, and
- (4.) The only east/west trails permitted will be those specifically allowed in the 1989 Balboa Park Master Plan supplement "the Florida Canyon Master Plan" (attached), and
- (5.) No wheeled vehicles (this includes all types of bicycles, skateboards, roller-skates, electric powered scooters, etc.) will be allowed except for those used by the handicapped or for children under eighteen (18) months when accompanies by a parent or guardian, and
- (6.) No canines except for certified service or support animals (comfort animals are not allowed),and waste must be picked up by the owner/caretaker of the animal, and
- (7.) Runners and exercise groups that have the sole purpose of exercise and do not enjoy or take a botanical or zoological interest in the canyon's diverse species and could potential interfere with others in the preserve for a mind/body experience, or has educational or passive recreational objectives.
- (8.) All "rabbit paths" or "social trails" must be closed and replanted.

What positive measures need be taken:

- (1.) The historical role and sustainable land practices along with the ethnobotany of the First People(and specifically the Kumeyaay Nation) shall be an important element in the design and development of Florida Canyon with specific elements in any educational programs.
- (2.) All exotic plants, for whatever their occurrence in Florida Canyon and its boundaries, shall be removed no later than five (5) years from the adoption of the revised Balboa Park Master Plan and to that end special attention will be given to the removal of all Eucalyptus, Myoporum, Strawberry and Pepper trees, commencing no later than one year after the adoption of the revised Balboa Park Master Plan, and to be completed no later than three years after the adoption of said plan,
- (2.) The streambed of Switzer Creek presently open shall remain open and have its biological integrity restored and preserved to promote the benthic macro-invertebrates that can support a native food pyramid, including but not limited to;

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- a. Zero-hydraulic check dams will be installed at regular interval to assure no greater than six inches (6') of water fall at any given point between Upas Street and Pershing Drive;
 - b. The riparian corridor will be designed for maximum benefit of flora and fauna, with people only allowed on foot at designated view points and all-weather improved pathways,
 - c. Incised stream banks greater in height than three feet (3') or with a slope of greater than sixty degrees (60°) shall be removed using the "Best Science Available" to return the riparian plant alliance to a natural condition.
- (3.) All pathways shall have an all-weather surface [preferably decomposed granite (d.g.), with appropriate drainage structures, velocity, pollution and volume measures and conveyance done to the standard of "Best Science Available",
 - (4.) All drainage conveyances not meeting the standard of "Best Science Available" shall be removed by the owner within ten (10) years of the adoption of this plan or face a fine of not less than one dollar per cubic foot (\$1/cu. ft) for each incident their drainage structure discharges "outlaw water" to the Florida Canyon native plant preserve (this means the San Diego Public works Department must correct all surface runoff from Morley Field Drive, Upas Street, Florida Drive and Florida Street, and Zoo Place, and the Bob Wilson Naval Medical Center and any other properties along the west side of the Florida Canyon Native Plant Preserve shall remove their "coal chute" designed concrete troughs presently directing "outlaw water" on properties to the east of their present location (replacement of said facilities shall commence no later than January 1, 2021 and be operational by ten (10) after the adoption of the updated Balboa Park Master Plan.
 - (5.) The two inch (2") galvanized pipe fire suppression system should be restored for Florida Canyon and be available for use in irrigating native plants,
 - (6.) There must be a budget of no less than five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000.00) each year for the next ten (10) years for the removal of all exotic species, closing of all non-authorized trails, restoration of the widest possible number of species native to San Diego County, and specifically the restoration of the Maritime chaparral plant alliance from Pershing Drive up to at least Zoo Place, and for use in grant applications for educational programs offered by the rangers in flora and fauna of the canyon and of the history, culture and ethnobotany of the Kumeyaay Nation.
 - (7.) The proposed Children's' Discovery Park at the northeast corner of Florida Canyon (south of Upas Street and west of Morley Field Drive) shall have all eucalyptus and Jade plants removed within two years of the adoption of this plan and the area will stress the role of the Kumeyaay Nation's role in the history of San Diego, their culture and ethnobotany and how it provides a roadmap for our own efforts to practice sustainability, climate control, and affording all peoples the meaningful opportunity of a mind/forest experience.
 - (8.) Sidewalks or pathways shall be provided continuously from Park Boulevard all the way to Morley Field Drive or Florida Drive (whichever is further), built to the "Best Science Available" with properly engineered drainage and lighting. If it is necessary to meet American with Disabilities Act guidelines, those walkways can "meander" onto park land to reduce the surface slope and give visitors further opportunity to view the flora and fauna of the preserve (Morley Field Drive and Upas Street both serve as school corridors for seventy five percent (75%) of the school body of the Theodore Roosevelt International Baccalaureate Middle School (RIMS). which comes from North Park.
 - (9.) The area of the Golden Hills Memorial Oak Grove shall be added to the area of the native plant preserve,
 - (10.) The area of Inspiration Point shall be added to the area of the native plant preserve.
 - (11.) The area of the proposed "International meadow" shall be added to the native plant preserve.

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- (12.) If the Pershing Drive bicycle corridor is constructed, then the portion of Florida Drive between Bob Wilson Drive and Morley Field Drive should be scaled back to a meandering pedestrian pathway.
- (13.) There shall be no less than sixteen (16) full-time rangers dedicated solely to Balboa Park with enforcement power to assure compliance with all Balboa Park rules, regulations and policies.
- (14.) There shall be no less than twenty-eight (28) full-time dedicated Grounds Maintenance workers to assure the grounds are maintained and improved by park personnel.
- (15.) There shall be an aggressive on-going coordinated effort to securing grants which local funds, equipment and volunteer labor can leverage for greater impact for the native plant preserve.
- (16.) The California Native Plant Demonstration Garden should have the Loop Trail made A.D.A. compliant by extending the north end of the trail eastward toward the Balboa Tennis Clubhouse and the south end extended eastward toward the tennis stadium so as to have the slope at least four percent (4%).

The Community Concept of Aldo Leopold:

"All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single promise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. His instincts prompt him to compete for his place in that community, but his ethics prompt him also to co-operate (perhaps in order that there may be a place to compete for).

The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals or collectively: the land."²

Let's assure that Florida Canyon is a member of our community and that we treat "the land" as we would each other and restore, preserve and protect the canyon for our mutual support and that all ages will have an outdoor botanical laboratory to experience and learn about the natural world. We can demonstrate our respect and reverence for our mother earth.



¹ A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There, Aldo Leopold, Oxford University Press, 1949, pages 201-226.

² Ibid: pages 203-204