

SCOPE

Santa Clarita Organization for Planning and the Environment

TO PROMOTE, PROTECT AND PRESERVE THE ENVIRONMENT, ECOLOGY
AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE SANTA CLARITA VALLEY

POST OFFICE BOX 1182, SANTA CLARITA, CA 91386



1-29-15

Wilburn Blount, District Ranger
Santa Clara/Mojave Rivers Ranger Station
3708 Crown Valley Rd.
Action, CA Acton 93510

Re: Scoping comments – Bouquet Creek Restoration Project

Dear Mr. Blount:

Founded in 1987, Santa Clarita Organization for Planning and the Environment (SCOPE) is a non-profit organization based in Northern Los Angeles County and organized to provide community oversight on planning and environmental issues in the watershed of the Santa Clara River. As Los Angeles County's last free-flowing river, home to a number of listed endangered species and a major source of our community's water supply, we give the preservation of the Santa Clara River and its tributaries a high priority in our efforts to ensure a sustainable and high quality of life for residents of the SCV as well as the protection of the local flora and fauna.

Since a documented population of the endangered UTS fish are found in Bouquet Creek¹, we felt it important to take a close look at this project.

Members of our organization conducted a site visit on Jan. 24th. At that time water was apparently being released from Bouquet reservoir. We photographed flows in the creek in several places as we drove down the Bouquet Canyon Rd. towards the Santa Clarita Valley. Flows continued to just north of Texas Canyon where they disappeared in the ground. The flows were clear and adequate to support a healthy population of fish.

We also observed Bouquet Creek flowing slightly onto the west side of Bouquet Canyon Rd. in the three places indicated in this notice as requiring maintenance work. While the flows did not seem great enough to be dangerous to automobiles, we could see how they might increase in a high rainfall event or be dangerous to cyclists. If the flows became icy, they could also create a traffic hazard.

We observed several culverts in the area that seem to be completely plugged and wonder if this could be adding to the problem.

¹ Unarmored Three-spine Stickleback, Five Year Review: Summary and Evaluation, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Ventura CA, May 29, 2008, Page 8

We see that cleaning the culverts, dredging out and removing some silt and the numerous willow or other riparian vegetation that is currently flourishing in the silted areas may resolve some of the issues created by the silt build up.

We note however, that there are several mature oaks and sycamores in the proposed dredging areas. These trees obviously pre-date any silt build up (based on their size which they could not have attained in the decade since this problem began) and should be preserved. So mechanical dredging should not be used near these trees.

Also, as the forest service is no doubt aware that the UTS don't tolerate turbidity:

“Apparently intolerant of turbidity, since it is not found in muddy water, this stickleback also avoids zones of swift current and those without any current.”²

Therefore we believe that a careful evaluation of any dredging that is to occur be evaluated for how much down stream turbidity it will create and its effect on any downstream population of UTS. Also, bank vegetation that creates “refugia” for the stickleback and slows the current as required for their habitat should not be removed, along with our previous concern that large, mature trees remain.

The scoping memo did not discuss where the sediment would be taken. We ask that the County indicate where it intends to dump the sediment so that we do not have a repeat of the horrendous loss of oaks and sycamores that occurred in Arcadia in 2010:

“..119 mature oak and numerous sycamore trees along the Santa Anita Flood Control Channel in Arcadia on land owned by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works. The trees were destroyed to make room for creation of a massive pyramid-shaped disposal site for sediment to be removed from the reservoir behind Santa Anita Dam.Although both the California Fish and Game Department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recommended that Public Works select a Biologically Preferred Alternative, which focused on preserving the oaks and trucking the sediment to the county-owned Manning Sediment Placement Pit in the San Gabriel Valley, the county Department ignored their recommendation, fearful of offending residents of Arcadia if trucks were used to transport the sediment out. (This despite the fact that Public Works plans to truck in sediment from other debris basins to the new Arcadia disposal site for decades to come.)”³

While we agree that this restoration proposal appears to be a viable win-win solution, we also ask that the County, DWP and the Forest Service look to the future. Should sediment build up in the creek occur again, what will be the solution? Should the road bed be raised in the low areas to address the problem? Are there other solutions besides dredging? Also, as part of the mitigation agreement, DWP should guarantee the Forest that flows will not be disrupted in Bouquet Creek in the future.

² Page 76012 Federal Register / Vol. 45, No. 223 / Monday, November 17, 1980 / Proposed Rules

³ Guest Column, Daily News, Jan 17th, 2011

Thank you in advance for your careful review of our concerns. We look forward to your response to our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lynne Plambeck". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L" and a distinct "P".

Lynne Plambeck
President