

Title: Ballona Wetlands Ecological Preserve Enforcement of No Overnight Parking Item No. 2.4
Meeting date: 10.25.2021
Agendized by: Ad-Hoc Encampment (Homeless) Committee
Contact person: Paula Gerez Phone number:
Committee Vote (if appropriate): Yes – 5
Does this item have a fiscal impact on the Neighborhood Council? NO
Additional documents attached? YES

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Asking for help to the protect the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Preserve from further damage from unregulated camping. Clean up and restore the public open space for all to enjoy and learn from.

**BACKGROUND:**

Due to the City’s suspended enforcement, a large permanent and unregulated RV encampment has become established along Jefferson Boulevard, including numerous vehicles that have not physically moved in many months, leading to the accumulation of massive amounts of personal property, semi-permanent structures, and garbage, including human waste, drug needles and paraphernalia, and other toxic and hazardous materials. The City has not provided adequate trash receptacles or collection, security, services, restrooms, or mobile RV pumping services, all of which has led to significant environmental degradation of this critical ESHA. There has been a significant uptick in drug use, crime, and violence associated with the RV encampment, including the shooting of four RV encampment residents in August 2021. The conditions created by the RV encampment, which significantly impede the public walkway between the curb at Jefferson Boulevard and the fenced boundary of the Ballona Wetlands, have deterred use of the Ballona Wetlands for the public recreational and educational purposes for which it was intended to be preserved. Additionally, there have been several fires related to the RV encampment, including an extensive fire in March 2021 which burned five acres of protected habitat within the protected ESHA, during which suppression efforts were hindered due to an inoperable RV blocking access to a needed fire hydrant.

**DISCUSSION:**

It has been approximately nineteen months since the Covid-19 emergency was declared and the current circumstances no longer present an emergency, as evidenced by the abundant availability of the vaccine and reopening of schools and businesses across the City and County. We need enforcement of the No Overnight Parking restrictions. Individuals residing in RVs that are in need of housing or services, after such vehicles have been relocated to areas where RV parking is already officially sanctioned or permitted, direct LAHSA or other City Street Engagement teams to begin the process of contacting such individuals and make such offers of services and housing placements. Lastly we need the City to promptly begin a comprehensive cleanup and removal of all remaining garbage, abandoned property, and/or hazardous materials left behind on Jefferson Boulevard after the RVs have been relocated, and restore the designated area to its intended purposes and uses.

The committee discussed the proposed motion and voted unanimously in favor to send to

the NCWP Board.

**FISCAL ANALYSIS:**

None known

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Motion to approve the City protect, conserve, restore and enhance Environmentally Sensitive Habitat (ESHA) known as the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Preserve

**MOTION:**

The Neighborhood Council of Westchester/Playa to urge the City protect, conserve, restore and enhance Environmentally Sensitive Habitat (ESHA) known as the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Preserve.

## Motion to protect, conserve, restore and enhance Environmentally Sensitive Habitat (ESHA)

Whereas, it is the City of Los Angeles' responsibility to protect, conserve, restore and enhance Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA);

Whereas, the Coastal Act policies provide protection for ESHAs, including various types of wetlands, sand dunes, riparian areas, coastal prairies, woodlands and forests and other biological resources in the coastal zone;

Whereas, the Ballona Wetlands is the largest remaining wetland habitat in Los Angeles County, a special status recognized by its designation as the only California State Ecological Reserve within the City of Los Angeles. It is further designated by the California Coastal Commission as a Critical Coastal Area due to the aquatic ecosystem's sensitivity to polluted runoff;

Whereas, the protected Ballona Wetlands Ecological Preserve supports a number of rare or endangered species documented in dozens of ecological surveys over the past half-century, including the federally endangered El Segundo blue butterfly, the State endangered Belding's savannah sparrow, the federally threatened Coastal California gnatcatcher, the federally endangered Least Bell's vireo, and the federally endangered Light-footed Ridgway's Rail;

Whereas, these delicate ecosystems are easily disturbed by human activities;

Whereas, the length of Jefferson Boulevard between Lincoln and Culver Boulevards adjacent to the protected Ballona Wetlands Ecological Preserve is designated as a "No Overnight Parking" area;

Whereas, the City has suspended enforcement of parking restrictions and halted towing and impounding of vehicles being used for dwelling purposes, under the guise of the Covid-19 emergency;

Whereas, due to the City's suspended enforcement, a large permanent and unregulated RV encampment has become established along Jefferson Boulevard, including numerous vehicles that have not physically moved in many months, leading to the accumulation of massive amounts of personal property, semi-permanent structures, and garbage, including human waste, drug needles and paraphernalia, and other toxic and hazardous materials;

Whereas, the City has not provided adequate trash receptacles or collection, security, services, restrooms, or mobile RV pumping services, all of which has led to significant environmental degradation of this critical ESHA;

Whereas, there has been a significant uptick in drug use, crime, and violence associated with the RV encampment, including the shooting of four RV encampment residents in August 2021;

Whereas, the conditions created by the RV encampment, which significantly impede the public walkway between the curb at Jefferson Boulevard and the fenced boundary of the Ballona Wetlands, have deterred use of the Ballona Wetlands for the public recreational and educational purposes for which it was intended to be preserved;

Whereas, there have been several fires related to the RV encampment, including an extensive fire in March 2021 which burned five acres of protected habitat within the protected ESHA, during which suppression efforts were hindered due to an inoperable RV blocking access to a needed fire hydrant;

Whereas, it has been approximately nineteen months since the Covid-19 emergency was declared and the current circumstances no longer present an emergency, as evidenced by the abundant availability of the vaccine and reopening of schools and businesses across the City and County;

We therefore move that the City Council: Mayor, Eric Garcetti, Councilmember, Mike Bonin, Councilmember, Gil Cedillo, Councilmember, Paul Krekorian, Councilmember, Bob Blumenfield, Councilmember, David R. Ryu, Councilmember, Paul Koretz, Councilmember, Nury Martinez, Councilmember, Monica Rodriguez, Councilmember, Marqueece Harris-Dawson, Councilmember, Curren D. Price, Jr., Councilmember, Herb J Wesson, Jr., Councilmember, John Lee, Councilmember, Mitch O'Farrell, Councilmember, Jose Huizar, and Councilmember, Joe Buscaino

- 1) Exempt the stretch of Jefferson Boulevard between Lincoln and Culver Boulevards from any governing emergency declaration(s); motion(s); resolution(s); or other legal or regulatory rule or doctrine preventing enforcement of the No Overnight Parking restrictions pertinent to that stretch of Jefferson Boulevard;
- 2) Authorize and direct Parking Enforcement, DOT, and/or any other entity or agency charged with the ability or responsibility for regulating parking, including towing and impounding of vehicles found to be in violation of the No Overnight Parking restrictions, to begin immediate issuance of citations, as well as a warning that vehicles will be towed within 72 hours if the owner does not re-locate to an area where RV parking is already officially sanctioned or permitted;
- 3) To the extent that any individuals residing in such RVs are in need of housing or services, after such vehicles have been relocated to areas where RV parking is already officially sanctioned or permitted, direct LAHSA or other City Street Engagement teams to begin the process of contacting such individuals and make such offers of services and housing placements; and
- 4) The City promptly begin a comprehensive cleanup and removal of all remaining garbage, abandoned property, and/or hazardous materials left behind on Jefferson Boulevard after the RVs have been relocated, and restore the designated area to its intended purposes and uses.