

**Ballona Creek Renaissance...**  
dedicated to renewing Ballona Creek and its watershed for a healthier, more sustainable environment and community.

(We are also known as BCR)  
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**In this issue:**

1. Creekside School Native Garden
2. Lycée Français
4. "Postcards" Mural Restoration
5. Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook
7. Partnership with FBW
8. Tour de Ballona 2
10. Around the Watershed

## BCR AWARDED GRANT FOR A CREEKSIDE NATIVE PLANT LEARNING GARDEN

Ballona Creek Renaissance (BCR) received good news from the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation (SMBRF): we've been awarded a \$13,145 Public Involvement and Education (PIE) grant for a "Creekside Native Plant Learning Garden". At their linked campuses adjoining Ballona Creek and its bike path, Culver City Middle School and High School students will help design, plant, and maintain an ecologically functional, water-wise, and low-maintenance garden of native plants in a highly visible location between the Ballona Creek bike path and the school athletic fields. The students participating in this "service learning" effort also will learn more about the beauty and utility of California native plants and the importance of preserving wildlife habitat.

The garden will add an attractive strip next to the bike path and help educate bikepath and athletic field users about Ballona Creek, native plants and the environment. The project complements the emerging Ballona Creek Greenway vision of the Watershed Task Force, as well as the Ballona Creek & Trail Focused Special Study, the Ballona Creek Watershed Management Plan, and Culver City's Ballona Creek Bikeway project.

With strong support from the school staff and key students, as well as the California Native Plant Society, BCR members looks forward to sharing their teaching and planting experience with the students. In fact the door is open for participation by community members, businesses, and other organizations as well.

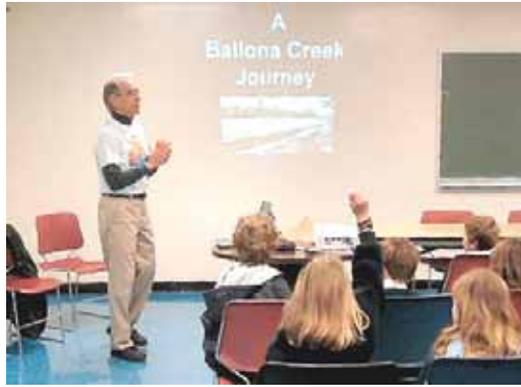
President Jim Lamm expressed pride that BCR has been selected for the grant in a very competitive process. With the SMBRF geographic territory extending from Malibu to downtown LA to the Palos Verdes Peninsula, the applicants were many and the funds available were few. BCR looks forward to meeting with students and staff in June to start the ball rolling, with a more extensive effort beginning in September.

SMBRF is the non-profit partner of the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission, a state agency. To learn more about these two organizations, visit <http://www.santamonibay.org/>



In this view looking west (downstream), the garden is planned to occupy a space of about 200' x 20' in the part of the strip beyond the trees. The bike path and creek are outside the fence on the left, and the school athletic fields are to the right.

## BALLONA CREEK RENAISSANCE VISITS LYCÉE FRANÇAIS



(L to R): Irene Reingold, Jim Lamm and June Walden explain watershed concepts to Lycée Français students

### BCR visits 3rd graders at Lycée Français de Los Angeles Overland Campus

By Sandrine Cassidy Schmitt

**Monday, February 9, 2009.** It was a rainy Monday morning in Los Angeles – so rare and so welcome. Ballona Creek Renaissance (BCR) President Jim Lamm, BCR members and retired teachers June Walden and Irene Reingold visit Lycée to talk about water, the creek, the wetlands and more. What a perfectly wet day to address this theme!

All of 3rd grade and their teachers were invited to attend the hour presentation and were split into two groups of approximately 30 children – a total of 64. This was the first part of a two-part BCR presentation – the next being a unique field trip to the Wetlands and Del Rey Lagoon on March 23rd.

Supported by a number of photographs and a Power-Point presentation, Jim enthusiastically went over how water naturally flowed from the Santa Monica Mountains through the city and into the ocean. Today, as the city has grown, some of these creeks have been replaced by drainage pipes, which lead to the exposed concrete creek located in Culver City, and then into the ocean. The children were excited to ask questions – to guess the name of birds, paw prints found along the creek. One student asked if they could go swimming on their field trip!

Irene Reingold then gave a historical account of Creek life. Who lived there? Why did they live there? In an interactive exchange, Irene explained that the Native Americans, the Tongva, lived near the rivers, creeks and streams where other wildlife and flora coexisted. The willows and tules were particularly important trees to the Natives since, when bent and intertwined, they would make sheltered huts. The importance of preserving native plants is an integral part of maintaining the Creek's ecosystem and one of BCR's great missions.

June Walden's presentation had a very unique angle. She called on many volunteers to help with an experiment to understand the creek and its importance. June creatively recreating a model of the watershed with sponges, towels, a backdrop and water... the kids had the chance to play 'mountains', 'clouds', and witness how it all works: where water comes from, where it runs and where it ends. June also focused on the producers and the consumers... the algae and the fish, the birds and other animals. From fauna to flora – we are all connected.

### Lycée 3rd Graders Tour the Wetlands with Jim Lamm, June Walden and Jeri Rozadilla

By Sandrine Cassidy Schmitt

**Monday, March 23, 2009.** Today Lycée 3rd graders visited the Wetlands Ecological Reserve located in Playa del Rey. It was a glorious sunny day with wind adding to the general excitement. We first grouped at the site of a reconstructed "Ki" shelter. We learned about how the natives cooked vegetables in baskets by using hot stones.

Then we split into 3 groups and visited an area adjacent to the dunes where we discovered wetlands covered in pickleweed and salt grass. We encountered courting mallards on the vernal pond where native coil bushes grow and dune lupine bloom (beautiful purple flowers). We discovered so many native and non-native plants, home to a healthy ecosystem of insects and bugs too...

## BCR HOSTS LYCÉE FRANÇAIS AT THE BALLONA WETLANDS



L to R: June Walden explains settlements of the native Tongva settlers; Looking up one of the canals in the wetlands; June and Jim explain the function and problems of Ballona Creek.

Once a natural habitat, the wetlands were impacted and altered over time through coastal development, oil wells, railroads, farming, ranching and dredging. Today 95% of the wetlands are gone. What's left is so crucial to the migratory birds that fly the Northern Southern belt along the Coast.

We had the pleasure of seeing a fleet of American Coot as they rested on their journey. These birds are a beautiful black with yellow beak. They are from the chicken family with chicken feet! We learned that young seagulls are brown and adults are white.

We ate lunch at Del Rey Lagoon and were greeted by geese. They didn't seem too perturbed by our little fleet! It was low-tide so we talked about tide.

We finished the visit with a walk to Ballona Creek where much of our city's water runs to the Pacific Ocean. The view was extraordinary – we could see the Santa Monica Mountains clearly and the snow up top the San Gabriel Mountains. If only the kids could

have walked on the Ballona rocks... it was so tempting!

Unfortunately we witnessed first hand what pollution is all about: plastic bags, bottles and trash were floating down the creek towards the ocean. It reminded us of the importance of our actions.

We would like to thank Jim, June and Irene from Ballona Creek Renaissance, as well as Jeri from Friends of Ballona Wetlands, who regularly volunteer to educate children about our Wetlands and the importance of Ballona Creek. Their dedication is what helps preserve the best parts of where we live and what makes Los Angeles a unique place. Awareness is also an essential element, and I believe our visit prompted awareness among students, teachers and parents.

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*Sandrine Cassidy Schmitt is the mom of one of the 3rd graders, a BCR volunteer and Lycée Alumnus.*

*Contact her at [cassidy.schmitt@gmail.com](mailto:cassidy.schmitt@gmail.com)*

*Editor's note: the Lycée teachers requested that photos not show students' faces. Photos by Sandrine herself.*

## OOPS! WE GOOFED!

In Paul Herzog's article about TMDLs in the January issue, the editor inserted some statements which Paul didn't write and which aren't quite right. A Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is a regulatory term in the U.S. Clean Water Act describing a value of the maximum amount of a pollutant that a body of water can receive while still meeting water quality standards. We should have said that the allowable amounts of various pollutants will be gradually decreased over time until

they meet the TMDLs established for those pollutants in that body of water. Cities and counties face stiff daily fines for violations.

Also in the January issue, our page 7 article about the meaning of the word "Ballona" quoted a source which referred to Felipe and Tomas Talamantes as brothers. According to Julie Lugo Cerra, Culver City Historian, this is a common error; they were father and son.

## "POSTCARDS FROM BALLONA" MURAL RESTORATION

*"We all really accomplished something quite wonderful." - Lori Escalera*

The eyesore is gone at last! In a crush of activity in mid-April, artists, students and community volunteers repainted the graffiti-marred mural on the wall beneath the parking lot at the County Library at Overland Avenue next to the creek.

**Origins of the mural.** Painted in 1997, the colorful mural was the first project by BCR's predecessor organization. Designed to bring an awareness of Ballona Creek to the community, the mural's six "postcards" depicted scenes from Ballona Creek and Culver City history. A "filmstrip" motif connected these postcards; the individual cells were created by Culver City Middle School students using their own ideas to interpret what the creek meant to them personally. The background water motif suggested the waterway as it runs from the mountains surrounding Los Angeles to the ocean.

**Graffiti protection.** The original mural was protected with a polyurethane coating that allowed graffiti to be easily removed by a special solution. It worked well for a few years but eventually broke down due to exposure to the elements. Graffiti could then no longer be removed. By 2009, much of the original mural was obscured, a depressing scene.

Finally, the City of Culver City funded a complete restoration as a community-based mural project led by Lori Escalera, one of the three original artists. First, the wall was resurfaced by local contractor Aaron Nordquist, and a numbered grid was drawn. In a frenzy of activity from April 19-22, about 30 students and 30 community volunteers reproduced the original mural. Additionally, about

90 students visited the site, meeting with Escalera and the other two original artists, François Bardol and Lucy Blake-Elahi, to better understand the significance of the mural. April 20 was so hot that the painters wilted in the heat, forcing a mass effort until late on the final day, when the heat turned into cold.

Thanks to essential support by BCR, Culver City, the library, corporate sponsors and so many student and community volunteers, the project was completed as scheduled. The 350 square foot mural (71 x 5 feet) was completed in three and a half days. The next day, an anti-graffiti coating was applied.

The volunteers were fed and refreshed by Sorrento Italian Market (sandwiches), Trader Joe's (snacks) and Splash Water Corporation (bottled water). BCR provided bulk water, tents, painting and other tasks, the Library provided staff support, and local neighbors lent their hands, and the mural was finished on time.

### **Artist Lori Escalera had this to say about the project:**

"The project was exciting from the beginning to the end. I didn't know who was going to show up and how the energy would flow. The students were a bit of a challenge because their skills were unknown. It was a delight to find that many of these teens had wonderful talents. They were a pleasure to work with and very helpful.

"I was hoping and praying that we'd get some volunteers with some painting abilities. We were very lucky to get a fabulous group of people: ART Group members, new BCR members, and neigh-



From top: Lori Escalera; Lucy Blake-Elahi, Philip Nagai; Mary Banks & Corinne Lightweaver



borhood residents. I think they would all like it if I could find another mural for them to come back out and help. We were racing to finish the mural as planned on Earth Day. On the last day it was exciting as the sun was close to setting. And by the end of the day and the completion of the project there were lots of hugs and a warm, peaceful, exhausted feeling that we all accomplished something quite wonderful."

**Community Stewardship.** Prior to the restoration, volunteers organized a community awareness program to make students aware

of the mural and encourage its protection to deter vandalism once it was completed. Community awareness is an important component of Escalera's successful community mural work in other areas. BCR boardmember Cathi Lamm, a Culver City teacher, arranged for artists Bardol and Elahi to speak to several middle and high school classes about respect for the mural.

We hope that community members who use the bike path will take an active role in protecting their new mural. To report any graffiti, call 310.253.5555 and se-

lect the graffiti hotline menu item. If you witness vandalism, call Culver City Police (310.837.1221) immediately, but don't approach offenders. The anti-graffiti coating will be renewed often enough so that graffiti removal will continue to be possible.

Escalera will also make some repairs to two other Culver City murals, **Rivers of the World** at the Duquesne Avenue entrance to the creek, and **Day to Night** at Syd Kronenthal Park. She was also an original artist on both those murals.

## BALDWIN HILLS SCENIC OVERLOOK STATE PARK

You can't play baseball or soccer or tennis at California's newest state park. There are no swings or sandboxes for toddlers. But you can enjoy magnificent views from the top-- the Hollywood sign and Griffith Observatory, the towers of downtown, Century City and the marina, and on a really clear winter day the snow-capped San Gabriel mountains. You can learn about the natural history of the Baldwin Hills and surrounding area, the creekside villages of the native Tongva, the plants that grew here and the birds, insects and animals that nested and foraged here. And you can exercise your legs on hilly hiking paths.

**Opening Day.** After almost a decade of planning and construction, the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park opened to a public celebration on April 18. The park itself celebrates and educates us about the history and



Visitor Center Exhibits



native plants and animals of the Baldwin Hills and surrounding areas with fascinating exhibits and some restored native habitat as well as 360-degree views from the top.

***In the beginning...***The news media have recounted how, in the year 2000, the state purchased 58 acres for \$41 million from a developer that had already begun grading the land for a gated community of over 200 homes. But they often overlook giving credit to Mary Ann Greene, then president of the Blair Hills Association in the Culver City neighborhood of Blair Hills, which lies on the east side of the Overlook hill. Her efforts marshalling the community, public officials and legal resources are the major reason the park exists.

***Opening Day.*** Master of Ceremonies for the event was Ron Schafer, CA State Parks Angeles District Superintendent. Other speakers included County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, Ms. Greene and David McNeill of the Baldwin Hills Conservancy, Culver City then-mayor Scott Malsin, and former State Senator Kevin Murray, who greatly facilitated the land acquisition and co-authored the legislation that created the Baldwin Hills Conservancy. The Dorsey High School Choir and the Culver City High School Jazz Combo entertained us.

Then the public was invited to visit the interpretive center and tour the walking paths. Urban Green Cuisine offered prepared food for purchase. Student members of the Crenshaw and Dorsey High School Eco Clubs, which had assisted park staff in restoring native plants, explained about the original environment and its connection to Ballona Creek. And children enjoyed environmentally-oriented activities.

***Student restoration programs.***

The participation of students was an important component of the restoration. Dorsey High School students wearing "Together Green" T-shirts were Restoration Leaders who have been leading volunteer events at the Scenic Overlook as well as Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area and the Least Tern colony at Venice Beach. The Restoration Leaders trained and led volunteer students from the Crenshaw and Dorsey High School Eco Clubs.

Restoration Leaders are paid for their work at restoration events under a program funded by a Toyota "Together Green" Grant through Los Angeles Audubon. The students in the internship program each receive a research scholarship paid incrementally over the school year.

Additionally at the Scenic Overlook, Los Angeles Audubon and EARTHWORKS Restoration conduct an after-school science program for science students from Dorsey High School where student interns learn about native habitat restoration and conduct original research. This program is funded by the Baldwin Hills Conservancy, and the interns' stipends are paid by donors to the Los Angeles Audubon Baldwin Hills education program. The interns were also on hand for the park opening in addition to carrying out their research all year.

Only a portion of the park has been replanted with natives. The rest depends on state funding.

***Visitor's Center.*** The Visitor Center with its interpretive exhibits is scheduled to be open Saturdays

Photos from top: 1. Exterior of Visitor Center. 2. Mark Ridley-Thomas with Mary Ann Greene. 3. A Dorsey High School "Together Green" student displays one of the native plants restored. 4. The Dorsey High School Choir entertains visitors. 5. Blue-Eyed Grass, a native member of the iris family, in bloom over much of the restored area.  
*Photos in this article by Lisa Fimiani, Marina Tidwell, and Bobbi Gold.*

and Sundays 10 AM to 3 PM. According to Kristen Perry, an interpreter who handles explanatory exhibits, State Parks will hire additional staff and train volunteer docents. However, staff limitations could alter the schedule. Even with plenty of docents, park staff must be on site. Due to the state budget crunch, they are in short supply. In the Los Angeles Sector, they cover several other state parks, including ones in downtown LA and Whittier. During a special event or problem elsewhere, no one may be available to keep the Visitor Center open. We hope that will be infrequent.

The state is currently taking applications for docent positions. Kristen reported that the response has been very encouraging, including retired persons, members of LA Audubon (with which State Parks has a partnership), and student members of the Crenshaw and Dorsey High School Eco Clubs. For the latest information about the park or volunteer positions, check the park website ([www.parks.ca.gov/bhso](http://www.parks.ca.gov/bhso)).



Footpath from Jefferson Blvd. to the top of the Overlook (roughly 350 feet of elevation gain)

## FRIENDS OF BALLONA WETLANDS AND BCR - A NEW PARTNERSHIP

Friends of Ballona Wetlands (FBW), a well-established and respected non-profit organization, has a 30-year history of high-quality education and ecosystem restoration in the Ballona wetlands. Through FBW programs, about 65,000 volunteers have removed non-native vegetation and planted natives, allowing native habitat to reestablish, which encourages the return of native birds and other animals.

Historically, FBW has concentrated its efforts in the Ballona Wetlands. BCR's work has been more upstream. But both organizations are concerned about the entire Ballona Creek watershed and the contaminated waters that drain from it into the wetlands and the ocean. And both are working to educate people about the seriousness of the situation and to raise awareness of how their behavior contributes to it. We often find ourselves hosting educational outreach booths at the same events, and we see that some of our projects overlap.

On March 24, BCR and FBW held a joint board meeting to explore a closer partnership in which we work together by design instead of merely finding ourselves in the same place at the same time. Both boards voted strongly in favor of a partnership. With details yet to be developed, this will include working together on some projects and also promoting each other's events.

**Joint project.** Even before the joint meeting, BCR and FBW joined forces to develop a project in the Ballona Creek stretch between Sepulveda Blvd and McConnell Ave. Working with Mar Vista Family Center, based next to the creek at Slauson Avenue, FBW has submitted a



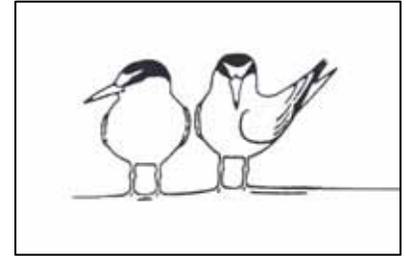
June Walden, a docent for FBW and a BCR boardmember, explains to participants in a Wetlands tour the importance of Pickleweed as bird and animal habitat.

grant application to the State-related Wetlands Recovery Project (WRP) on behalf of the three organizations for a project described as follows:

The physical goal of this project is to plan, create and maintain a native riparian (stream-side) restoration site along Ballona Creek in Del Rey with the involvement of residents. The neighborhood is an underserved low-income community adjacent to the creek adjacent to Slauson Avenue. Through education, mentoring, and hands-on experience for youth and families, the project will help the community better understand its environment and the Ballona Creek channel as a living ecosystem connecting the city, wetlands, and sea.

FBW's Kelly Rose, Director of Education and Restoration, and BCR's Jim Lamm and Dino Parks worked together extensively to submit this grant proposal. As part of the process, they participated in a WRP workshop to provide peer feedback on project concepts and help applicants improve their proposals. The team also found welcome encouragement at the City and County

of Los Angeles and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority. Expecting a decision from WRP in June, BCR and FBW look forward to the possibility of working together on this and similar ventures as we help to connect communities with their environment.



To get BCR email updates on this and other news, sign up on our web site home page. For a brief description of what the Wetlands Recovery Project is and does, visit [www.scwrp.org/](http://www.scwrp.org/). And for a real treat, visit FBW's beautiful and informative redesigned website at [www.ballonafriends.org/](http://www.ballonafriends.org/)

FBW will hold its annual community meeting June 10. See page 10 for information.

## TOUR DE BALLONA 2

By Dino Parks

Over 60 cyclists came out for Tour de Ballona 2, an interpretive 11-mile round trip ride along the Ballona Creek Bike Path, on Saturday, January 31. This follow-up to the first Tour de Ballona (October '08) was organized by Damien Newton and Marie Massa of Concerned Bicyclists of the Ballona Creek Bike Path (CB-BC), with assistance from Ballona Creek Renaissance (BCR). Beautiful weather and a friendly atmosphere welcomed all the participants, who gathered at Culver City Park and rode in two groups to the beach and back. The Tour was designed to allow riders to make several stops along the way and hear speakers with various perspectives on the creek and the surrounding environment. Tour guides were Paul Herzog, Jim Kennedy and Dino Parks.

The first stop was at Overland Ave., near the Culver City Library. Riders heard from Charles Herbertson, Director of Culver City Public Works. Charles pointed out the Continuous Deflective Separation trash filter on the drain that enters the creek there, and discussed other ways his department is working to treat stormwater before it enters the creek. He and others also described the city's planned Ballona Creek Bikeway project, which would remove concrete and add native landscaping and other amenities to the bike path between Overland and the pedestrian bridge. BCR's Jim Lamm also noted the scheduled Earth Day restoration of the "Postcards From Ballona" mural.

Just west of the Centinela Ave. bike path entrance, Barbara Romero, Leslie Chan and Ana Petric of the Mountains Recreation Conservation Authority discussed the MRCA's role in creating the mini-park there. Native landscaping, benches, and a sculpted entry gate have improved conditions for both cyclists and pedestrians. In addition, MRCA will be implementing another park just to the west, the Milton Street linear greenway (described in the January 2009 newsletter).



At the Centinela Ave. entrance, Leslie Chan, Ana Petric and Barbara Romero describe MRCA's creek projects.

Near the Marina Freeway overcrossing and the McConnell Ave. entrance, Kent Strumpell of the LA County Bicycle Coalition described efforts by the cycling community to maintain access to the creek trail. A small but vocal group of residents near the trail in the Del Rey neighborhood had asked for closure of one of the entry gates, and BCR and LACBC were among those who lobbied at the LA City Council Transportation Committee meeting for continued access. Negotiations by many parties resulted in a commitment of added safety improvements in the area by CalTrans and the City of LA, including lights under the 405 Freeway overpass and two security cameras in the area.

As they neared the mouth of the creek and the Pacific Ocean, cyclists rode through protected coastal wetlands. Stopping on the bridge over the creek in Playa del Rey, riders heard from Kelly Rose, Program Director for Friends of Ballona Wetlands (FBW). She displayed a map of the historical footprint of the wetlands, now reduced to a small fraction of their range by the marina, channelization of the creek, and development in the surrounding areas. She also discussed the scheduled marsh tours and volunteer opportunities available at the wetlands.

LAPD Officers Heidi Llanes and Drake Madison from the LAPD Pacific Division shared the bridge with Kelly. They discussed safety on the Ballona Trail, and offered common-sense precautions for cyclists and pedestrians. Many questions were asked about attacks on the bike trail (we know of two in 2008), and the officers described their patrols on the path and in the neighboring areas.

As the riders made their way back, Jim Lamm and FBW's Catherine Tyrrell addressed the cyclists at the site of the County's trash collector net near the Lincoln Blvd. trail entrance. They talked about the importance of efforts by everyone to control pollution flowing in the creek into the Santa Monica Bay and the consequences of that pollution, especially plastic.

The final stop of the day was outside the Mar Vista Family Center at the Slauson Ave. gate in Del Rey. Joey Bravo and Jesus Orozco spoke of the 27 years that MVFC has been working with children at the site, and how they have grown to work with local youth to help them stay in school and get to college. Pre-school, after school programs, summer camp, tutoring, counseling and college prep are all part of MVFC's outreach in the community. (MVFC celebrated the opening of their new Teen Center across the street from Culver-Slauson Park on March 14.)

Back at Culver City Park after the Tour, several riders agreed that they had a new understanding of some of the issues that are of importance along the creek. This



Above, Kelly Rose describes native Tongva settlements on the banks of the natural Ballona Creek before the arrival of European settlers.

Below, LAPD officers Heidi Llanes and Drake Madison address concerns about safety on the bikepath.



tour is one of many initiatives in which BCR has participated that are beginning to create positive results out of problems.

*Jim Lamm also contributed to this article.  
Photos by Lisa Fimiani and Damien Newton.*

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## AROUND THE WATERSHED

### FBW Community Meeting Wednesday, June 10

Friends of Ballona Wetlands will present its annual community meeting featuring a panel of experts speaking about the value of wetlands restoration, coastal wetland success stories and other topics. Speakers will include Dr. Michael Josselyn, Mary Small of the Coastal Conservancy, and FBW boardmembers Dr. David Kay and Dr. Edith Read. Refreshments at 6:30, program 7:00-9:00 pm. Location: the district office of Councilman Bill Rosendahl, 7166 W. Manchester Blvd, Westchester, CA 90045. Ample free parking. Questions? contact [restoration@ballonafriends.org](mailto:restoration@ballonafriends.org) or (310) 306-5994.

### New Ballona Creek Entrance Gates

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority plans three new entrance areas to the Ballona Creek bikepath similar to the attractive one at Centinela Ave. (see our June 2005 issue for photos and article). MRCA has received funding and approval to proceed with construction and planting for new entrance parks at McConnell Ave., Inglewood Blvd. and Sepulveda Blvd. and is now negotiating with some artists to design and install the gates. MRCA will also fix major plumbing problems which have rendered the drinking fountains at Centinela Avenue waterless. Details, design sketches and photos in future E-Updates and our next issue.

### Willows Community School's Big Sunday on the Creek

On Big Sunday, May 3, over 250 volunteers turned out for a combination Ballona Creek cleanup and watershed education event based at the Duquesne Avenue crossing in Culver City. Ten education stations staffed by parents lined the bike path. Student cleanup volunteers checked in at each to learn about different creek and watershed topics and organizations and have their passports signed for credit. While the Big Sunday team, Culver City, LA County, and BCR all played key roles, event organizer/parent Annie Holleb and the Willows community really made a difference!

### Marina del Rey Dredging

This past winter, the US Army Corps of Engineers completed a project to remove about 53,000 cubic meters of contaminated silt that formed shoals impairing the entrance to Marina del Rey harbor. Most of this silt came down Ballona Creek; some had been carried down the coast by wave action. In the past, the Corps couldn't

### Want to be involved?

Volunteers help us grow and complete more and bigger projects. Some ways to be involved are:

- Helping with outreach at our booths at various events
- Helping with email broadcasts and updating our website
- Planning public programs and lectures
- Researching appropriate grant opportunities and/or preparing grant applications
- Brainstorming and planning fundraising events
- Taking docent training from LA Audubon to prepare for leading groups
- Working with native plant gardens

And other ways according to your skills, interests, experience and available time. Every organization needs these activities and a loyal base of public support to accomplish them. If you're interested, please contact Jim Lamm at (310) 839-6896 or email [jim.lamm@ballonacreek.org](mailto:jim.lamm@ballonacreek.org).



BCR Board Minus One

dredge routinely to maintain the required depth because of the problem of disposing of so much contaminated material. This time, a new process was used to separate fine-grained contaminants from sand clean enough to replenish the local beaches. Dredged silt, sand and water were pumped through pipes two miles south to equipment in a beach parking lot. Clean sand was distributed offshore, while contaminated material was taken to a safe inland disposal site.

## Del Rey Lagoon Construction Threat

Shore birds visit the Del Rey Lagoon, which connects to Ballona Creek and has full tidal flow. In February, local environmentalists and Playa del Rey residents scrambled to rally against proposed construction on a portion of the lagoon. The northern part is privately owned, while the rest of the lagoon and the adjacent park are LA City property. A community meeting presented speakers from various agencies and organizations. We understand the developer and LA City are talking about a possible purchase or land swap, strongly supported by Councilman Rosendahl, the Mayor, and local Neighborhood Councils. We'll keep you posted.



Del Rey Lagoon at mid-tide. Various shore birds forage here. At the back (north) end is the south bank of Ballona Creek, with a tidal gate between the creek and lagoon. In the distance are residences in Marina del Rey.

## Reseda High School Returns!

In a smaller-scale reprise of last year's big field trip, a Reseda High School science teacher brought 24 students to Ballona for an educational tour led by BCR's June Walden and Jim Lamm. After a walk around the lush bird habitat of the Freshwater Marsh at Jefferson and Lincoln Boulevards, they enjoyed a picnic lunch at Del Rey Lagoon Park. Then an informative walk along the lagoon viewing lots of coots and other birds. The students saw the wide mouth of Ballona Creek and the habitat area threatened by construction (see above). Walks in the saltwater marsh and dunes capped off their outside-the-classroom learning experience.

## Antioch U, Too!

On Saturday, May 16, Jim Lamm returned to the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve with several adult students from Antioch University-Los Angeles as part of his all-day Wetlands Ecology Workshop. After a morning of on-campus dialog, the students saw the wetlands from multiple viewpoints, both physically and in terms of the diverse stakeholders and issues. The comprehensive tour started at the Centinela Avenue crossing of Ballona Creek, which marks the beginning of the natural bottom tidal portion of the creek. Subsequent stops and walks included the Lincoln Boulevard creek crossing and its trash net, Del Rey Lagoon, the mouth of the

creek, the freshwater and saltwater marshes, the bluff-side park overlook, and the Playa Vista riparian corridor— all part of the Ballona Wetlands ecosystem.

## Here are those documents you wanted:

(The short links look strange, but they work.)

### Draft Ballona Greenway Plan:

Former Ballona Creek Watershed Coordinator and Greenway Committee Chair Jessica Hall has documented the committee's extensive work in an exciting study of opportunities and concepts to green the creek. This link takes you to the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission website where you can download the draft plan (bottom of page) and its appendix (top of next page): <http://tinyurl.com/o4el23>.

### Ballona Wetlands Restoration:

Another SMBRC web page concerns restoring habitat in the Ballona Wetlands, a very controversial matter because some alternatives involve grading. In a May 20 meeting, various updated concepts were presented along with a look at the recently completed restoration of the Carpinteria Salt Marsh. After a short hiatus due to the State's budget crisis, the lengthy planning process and plans for near-term improvements continue amid uncertainty. See <http://tinyurl.com/o62tdg>

## Mark your calendars for these coming events:

**August 29-30:** Fiesta la Ballona, Culver City

**September 19:** Annual creek and coastal cleanup

Editor: Bobbi Gold

This newsletter reflects and celebrates the diversity of the people and activities of the watershed and beyond. La Ballona Creek Renaissance Program is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Our Tax ID # is 95-4764614. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Please mail contributions to Ballona Creek Renaissance, P.O. Box 843, Culver City, CA 90232. For address corrections, additions or deletions, please call (310) 837-3661 or email [secretary@ballonacreek.org](mailto:secretary@ballonacreek.org). Printed on recycled paper.



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Address correction requested

## MAY 2009 NEWSLETTER

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### **BALLONA CREEK RENAISSANCE** needs your help to renew the Westside's forgotten river and its watershed!

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I would like to volunteer my time       I would like to join the board of directors/advisory council

I would like to donate goods, materials or services (such as office or storage space, computer or office equipment, food for special events, printing, etc.)

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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