

DECEMBER 2021

A note from BCR's President

We hope this newsletter finds you healthy, well fed and thriving – basically these are the same wishes we have for the Ballona Creek! I wanted to share some of the things we've been working on in the past 2 years. In the beginning of COVID, Ballona Creek Renaissance (BCR) was concerned that we would be hindered in our efforts to effectively serve our watershed and community - we now have a minute to look back on the past and see that we have really accomplished quite a bit! I became President in the beginning of 2021, on the heels of Amy Rosenstein and Jim Lamm. My short-term goals are to engage with the Mar Vista Gardens community, take our "Takin' it from the Streets!" campaign onto the streets, focus on a native/learning garden project, and remain diligent in our pursuit of eliminating polystyrene and plastic use in the City of Culver City – among other things. Deborah Gregory

"Takin' it From the Streets!"

The Takin' it campaign received a labor grant in 2019 from Culver City to host a clean-up event day at 5 of their parks. We had to postpone this event but had great success in taking it to the actual streets! We collaborated with the Rotary Clubs of Culver City and Inglewood and gave out gloves and hand-painted buckets for whomever chose to continue cleaning the streets on their own. Participants included Mar Vista Gardens, the French and German consuls, students from CCUSD and many more wonderful volunteers. **NOTE:** We have been providing community service hours to students that emailed photos of removing trash from the streets and throughout all events we posted our clean up data on CLEAN SWELL app under our BCR's name.



A "Takin' it From the Streets Event



Board member Sunny Zhao strikes a pose



Stoner Ave. Elementary School Native Learning Garden

We also received a grant for a native plant/learning plant garden at Stoner Avenue Elementary and have been making progress on this front. Since this school is on the Sepulveda Channel, it's only appropriate that it would offer bird and owl nesting opportunities as well as food sources for the killdeer that search for insects every evening along the channel. Providing these invaluable roosting and biodiversity opportunities are key to Los Angeles' wildlife health. LA Audubon Society, Stoner Ave. Elementary School principal and BCR recently met with the Principal of Esperanza Elementary school, near McArthur Park, to tour their native plant garden and we are all very excited about the potential for Stoner!

An aspirational image of how Stoner's gardens will look!

Enhanced Polystyrene Ban

This year sees a great win for plastic reduction, with Culver City leading the way with a strong ban in our region! Since the original polystyrene ban in 2017, BCR has been pushing Culver City for a more encompassing ban and after many years of negotiations and pandemic delay, City Council finally adopts a more comprehensive [plastic ban](#) called the "[Waste Reduction Regulation](#)". Any regulated entity shall only use, sell, or distribute utensils, stirring sticks or straws made from materials that are acceptable by the City's organics collection program and only upon a customer's request for any of those items. Effective Jan 1, 2022: The sale, use and distribution of all polystyrene packaging is banned citywide, including meat trays. Food service ware must be acceptable in the Organics bin. Effective Jan. 1, 2023: Establishments with dine-in customers will need to use reusables (except paper liners, paper napkins or foil wrappers are acceptable). No City entity or entity contracting with the city shall sell, use or distribute plastic water bottles. This ordinance helps address the devastating amounts of pollution debris out in our environment, but our everyday actions can make a difference too. We need a cultural shift from our dependence on disposables and we can all do our part by turning to REUSABLES ONLY in our everyday lives!

continued

Ballona Creek Renaissance Club at Culver City H.S.



When you see board member George Young's truck, follow it to clean-up fun!

From CCHS BCR Club President Mia Cassidy “Over the past two years BCR club at Culver City High School has worked to educate students on climate change, global environmental current events, and create change in our community. We have organized a handful of clean ups on the creek and the surrounding area to divert waste from floating out into our oceans from the creek. These clean ups are a big success as they are a time when students can interact with each other and meet new people, all while picking up hundreds of pounds of trash collectively and making an impact in our city. As president over the past two years, I coordinated the club's participation in an environmental campaign called “Grades of Green”. Throughout the campaign project we contacted local restaurants to enable them to become sustainable businesses. Pasta Sisters, a family owned Italian restaurant with two locations, expressed interest in our initiative and we worked together for over 6 months. I initiated and oversaw the removal of all single use plastic items in both of their locations, **going from 2,500 water and juice bottles a month to 0 and 6,500 plastic bags monthly, to 0!** They also stopped the use of polystyrene and single use plastic containers, updated their recycling practices, mandated all onsite dining food ware to be reusable, and ensured that paper straws only be provided upon request. With these changes, they met our target goal, and qualified for the sustainable certification! However, after much encouragement and conversation, Pasta Sisters decided to go even further, switching to energy and water conservation appliances in their restaurants, and even adding vegetarian and vegan options to the menu. Through this immense progress, Pasta Sisters received the Platinum Level Ocean Friendly Restaurant Certification from Surfrider Foundation. To help offset their transitional costs, I created a fundraiser in which our club got student artists to make designs that we printed onto hundreds of tote bags to sell, raising \$1,300. Additionally, we have developed 3 subcommittees: Education, Fundraising, and Outreach. Through these, students work together to inspire others to take care of our planet, recruit new members & volunteers, and educate our community about the direct effect we have on our surrounding environment.”

Increased Urban Development

Due to the continued development in Culver City and Los Angeles, the open space and safe bike route that the creek offers continues to gain value. BCR remains engaged in enhancement projects that further the network of safe bike routes. The creek side Jackson Gate opening in Culver City, the enhanced bike lanes along Culver and Washington Blvd. in Culver City, and a proposed bike path along Sepulveda Channel will help in minimizing automobile traffic, reducing carbon emissions, and offers an excellent fitness opportunity to the community. We encourage developers to support the non-profits that care for the creek and the wetlands nature preserve by supporting on-going preservation efforts.

GRATITUDE to our Supporters and Collaborators

We are very grateful for the immense yearlong support from LA County Flood Control, the City of LA Council District 11 -Mike Bonin's Office, the Del Rey Neighborhood Council and Del Rey Homeowners Association, LA County Supervisor Holly Mitchell, Assembly member Isaac Bryan, Craig Cadwallader, City of Culver City EPO team, among many other collaborators. Also of course, our most valued and active volunteers for their endless work and dedication to healing the creek. We are proud to be on the advisory committee for a greening project in the Del Rey neighborhood near the Mar Vista Gardens, led by KDI (Baldwin Hills Conservancy Grant).

On-going efforts & donations

-The Ocean Cleanup's “[Interceptor](#)” Project may not arrive next year after all. Due to a small group of oppositional residents near the proposed location at the mouth of the creek, we may lose out on the opportunity to capture creek pollution before it goes out to the Pacific! This simple, solar-powered trash collecting barge that has been engineered specifically for the unique water flow of the creek was projected to be installed a year ago but was delayed due to COVID. Now it's scheduled to ship beginning of 2022, but we have just learned that it may not happen. Please reach out to Janice Hahn's office at <https://lacounty.gov/government/supervisors/janice-hahn/> to express your support of this much-needed 2-year pilot project! -We also remain supportive of a beautiful Wetlands Nature Preserve with a focus toward enhancements for native plants and wildlife. -Additionally, we are always looking for collaborators, new ideas, and new engagement opportunities for our beloved creek. Our focus has always been plastic pollution reduction, habitat enhancement, and community education about our watershed through engagement. Please consider supporting us in our all-volunteer organization. Tax-deductible year-end donations can be made through the link on our website or click <https://ballonacreek.org/campaigns/donate/>

Questions or comments? Please reach out to info@ballonacreek.org

...and best wishes in 2022 to all of our watershed community!

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