

Communication from Public

Name: Scott Culbertson

Date Submitted: 01/31/2022 06:13 PM

Council File No: 20-0291

Comments for Public Posting: My name is Scott Culbertson and I'm Executive Director of Friends of Ballona Wetlands. I oppose the resolution on item 22 & ask the city council to rescind the moratorium on parking enforcement for vehicle dwellings. As a resident of Venice I'm very aware of the homelessness situation in Los Angeles. It's an out-of-control humanitarian crisis - for our unhoused neighbors and all residents of Los Angeles. 44 years ago our founders saved the wetlands from development and negotiated creation of the Ballona Freshwater Marsh located at the corner of Lincoln and Jefferson in Playa Del Rey. Today more than 80 RVs, tent encampments and the associated debris piles along Jefferson Blvd are destroying this sensitive habitat that is home native plants and animals. This a birding hotspot with 264 species of birds documented at this site. Prior to this massive encampment taking over the area you would see children, families, nature-classes, seniors, and nature lovers walking the site. They could park safely on Jefferson and enjoy this urban oasis. Today it is so dangerous and unsafe no-one uses the area. According to study issued last year by the Trust for Public Lands it was found that Los Angeles is a park-poor city - we can ill-afford to lose what little green-space we have. Again, I'm aware of the hundreds of encampments throughout Los Angeles - but destruction of this sensitive and beautiful habitat makes this situation unique. Inhabitants of these encampments are using the marsh as a bathroom. The RVs, buses, and cars are in disrepair and leaking fluids - oil, gasoline, septic tank waste - all of which flows to storm drains and into the wetlands and the ocean when it rains. Last year a fire started by an encampment burned nearly 5 acres of habitat - some of it used by the federally-endangered Least Bells Vireo. During this fire an RV was blocking a fire hydrant and could not be moved because it did not run. Last year 4 people were shot. More than an acre of mature habitat has been destroyed along Jefferson where the RVs and tents are encamped on the city right-of-way. Drug use by residents of the encampments is rampant and needles line the public walkways and sensitive habitat areas. I could go on and on about the impacts to the environment. Attached is a presentation submitted to Councilmember Bonin's office in September 2021. The problem is real - real for our unhoused neighbors and real for the wildlife

that call the Marsh home. Continuing to allow people to live in these conditions is not humanitarian and shameful. Allowing destruction of sensitive habit is heartbreaking. Thank you for your time. Scott Culbertson

Ballona Freshwater Marsh Ecological and Public Access Maintenance and Repair

The Ballona Freshwater Marsh (Marsh) is located at the corner of Jefferson and Lincoln Blvds. in Los Angeles, and is managed by the Ballona Wetlands Conservancy. Along Jefferson Blvd., there is city street parking for public access to the woodchip trail around the periphery of the Marsh. Over the last two years, the city street has become inundated with RVs, tents, and car encampments. The ecological health and public access to the Marsh has significantly deteriorated due to semi-permanent encampments along Jefferson Blvd, which occurs in street and on the adjacent trail, but also spills past the fence into the Marsh habitat area.



Exhibit A. Photo comparison, April 2016, event by Ted Lieu about legislation to expand the Santa Monica Recreation Area (left), and August 27, 2021, foreground missing shrubs on the left side of the trail that had been present back in 2016 (right).



Exhibit B. Photo comparison, May 12, 2013 (left) to August 27, 2021 (right).

This situation has reduced safe and reasonable access to the Marsh. There is not a single parking space available for families, nature lovers, or birders to visit the marsh - nor for staff who conduct maintenance and research. Maintenance crews, staff, and volunteers must park in Playa Vista. This increases travel time to access the marsh, including walking an extra 20 minutes each way to access the research site that previously took fewer than 5 minutes while carrying bulky scientific equipment. Visitorship to the marsh has been reduced by more than half; those who manage to park near the marsh have had their cars vandalized and burglarized. Some car dwellers have also parked directly on the trail, in front of gates and in habitat areas, blocking access for crews, and emergency vehicles, and destroying habitat.



Exhibit C. Long line of RVs beginning at the start of the marsh and stretching to Lincoln Blvd. and parked in red zones and bike paths (top). A van blocking access to the marsh driveway while parking on the trail (bottom).

The encampments have greatly degraded the habitat quality of the marsh and created public safety and public health issues. Visitors, crew, and staff have been assaulted verbally and, in some cases, physically. A shooting occurred recently that left four RV dwellers hospitalized. The street, right-of-way, and trail are packed with hundreds of pounds of litter, human waste, BBQ grills, tents, furniture and more. There are also campfires, gasoline tanks, propane tanks, gas-powered generators, bike chop-shops, car repair pop-up shops, and off leash dogs and free roaming cats. The bike lane is perpetually blocked so cyclists must venture into the driving lanes to get around cones, RV pop-outs, improperly parked cars, debris, and more. This is dangerous because cars drive too fast on Jefferson Blvd. and often do not slow down when passing the encampment.



Exhibit D. RV's with BBQs, gasoline, spilling oil and chemicals, blocking the bike lane, syringes, and overflowing trash and litter covering the trail.

Off leash pets create significant issues for people and wildlife. Off leash dogs are a hazard for both visitors and wildlife; dogs run into oncoming traffic and scare marsh visitors by charging and barking. Dogs pose environmental concerns as well, as they are regularly found off leash along Jefferson and past the fence, scaring-off wildlife and running through the water and on the maintenance road. Dog and cat feces are not picked up by pet owners. A house cat along the trail may seem like a small quibble, but cats are a leading cause of death of wild birds, killing billions of birds each year. To introduce them into wild spaces that may be partially protected by roads from some urban predators is a disservice to the wildlife.



Exhibit E. Off leash pets at the Marsh.

The encampment has resulted in physical damage to Marsh infrastructure. Daily, the maintenance crew repairs damage as quickly as possible, but these attempts are often futile. Chains and locks are stolen on a regular basis, sometimes the day after they are replaced. Fences and gates are constantly kicked in or destroyed or used for firewood within days of being repaired. Monitoring equipment, repair materials, and tools have been stolen.



Exhibit F. Examples of gates and fences being repeatedly destroyed at the Marsh.

Furthermore, campers have been seen fishing and bathing in the water, using the marsh as a toilet, snaring birds (one bird was rescued by a local birder). Campers have severely impacted habitat availability and quality, by cutting down mature trees, digging up and driving over large established shrubs, creating large bare patches of exposed earth that once had thriving plant life, and degrading the soil and mulch layer, all which have consequences for wildlife and the health of the ecosystem. Wildlife forages through piles of trash and have been fed by the campers, which causes human habituation and spreads disease, both of which would result in death.



Exhibit G. Examples of habitat destruction and impacts to wildlife, including build-up of waste, damage to mature plants, impacts on nesting sites, large areas of native habitat lost, and wildlife following Marsh visitors expecting to be fed.

The native landscaped area between the street parking and the trail has been severely damaged and degraded. In addition to photographic documentation of the extent of trash accumulation and fence damage along the Jefferson edge, we assessed impacts to the native landscape between the public trail and the curb. This was done using aerial imagery from 2016,

before the RV parking became a problem, compared to 2021. Each shrub discernable in the aerial photographs was marked with a point using Geographic Information System (GIS) software.

Results of the analysis are shown in Exhibit G. A total of 127 shrubs were discernable in these photographs in 2016, compared to 76 in 2021. This impact has occurred gradually over time, with open spaces between the shrubs eventually expanding to accommodate canopies and other shelters. Less noticeable in the aerial photographs, but obvious on the ground as illustrated in the photo below taken in March of 2021, is the extent to which signage has been removed or damaged, and trash/belongings are intermixed with the shrubs, further diminishing their value to wildlife and the public.

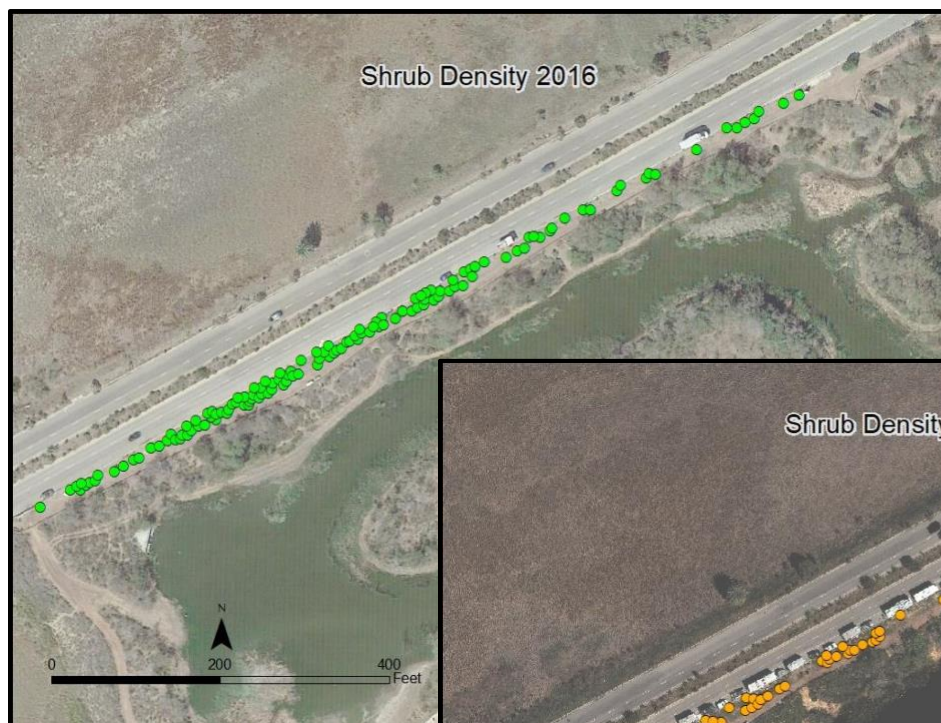


Exhibit H. Comparison of Shrub Density

The cost to repair the damage and maintain the trail and native landscaping is substantial and requires assistance from the City of Los Angeles. The street will need to be cleared, waste removed, soil repaired, plants installed and cared for, signage replaced, and more. These costs are estimated and described in Table 1. The total cost is estimated to be \$63,450.

Table 1. Estimated Costs

Category 1: Native Landscape Repair	Description	Estimated Cost
Replace Native Landscaping	The native landscaping strip along Jefferson Blvd. will need to be replanted with a minimum of 60 5-gallon shrubs to reach the coverage documented in 2016, as well as areas cleared by campers inside the fence. Soil is highly disturbed and compacted and will need to be repaired before planting. Wildflower seeds will also be required to sufficiently fill the damaged space. List of species and sizes will be provided. Changes to the plant palette must be approved by the Ballona Wetlands Conservancy.	
	Plants Adjacent to the Trail:	\$2,000
	Plants Inside the Fence:	\$500
	Labor to prep compacted soil, dig holes:	\$4,000
	Materials:	\$1,000
	Installation of Plants by Volunteers	In-kind
Water New Plantings	Weekly watering to supplement rainfall by a water truck. Estimated to be required for 6 months.	
	Water truck rental (\$500/day):	\$12,000
	Labor:	\$4,000
Category 2: Signage	Description	Estimated Cost
Repair Signage	Several educational signs throughout the marsh have been damaged and removed from their mounts, these will need to be repaired and remounted.	\$300 for materials and labor
Work Signage	Signs to inform the public about repair work	\$900 including installation
Permanent No Access Signage	Signs to inform the public that the maintenance road behind the fence is off limits to the general public	\$250

Category 3: Trail Repair	Description	Estimated Cost
Replace Fencing	The entire length of fence along Jefferson Blvd. has been damaged, removed, or graffitied and will need to be replaced. Old and broken fencing must be removed and hauled-away.	Materials, installation, and haul away. Total: \$23,000
Remove Trash and Waste	Trash and debris buildup along Jefferson Blvd. and waste including syringes, human and dog waste, oil spills, and more must be removed.	\$4,500
Mulch Replacement	The woodchip mulch along the trail has been displaced and impacted by the encampment, fresh mulch needs to be applied. New plants will also need to be surrounded by mulch.	
	Trail and wood chip mulch:	\$5,000
	Shredded mulch for around plants:	\$6,000
Total Estimated Cost:		\$63,450

Communication from Public

Name: Rick swinger

Date Submitted: 01/31/2022 08:08 PM

Council File No: 20-0291

Comments for Public Posting: On item 22 we need this unregulated RV camping to stop now! The raw sewage that is flowing into the Wetlands and Our Public Beaches from these RV's is putting the public at risk for many diseases like Hepatitis A which can be a death sentence to young children for their immune systems are just developing!
<https://imgur.com/gallery/2SoRbLN>

Communication from Public

Name: Vicki Halliday

Date Submitted: 01/31/2022 08:14 PM

Council File No: 20-0291

Comments for Public Posting: Please OPPOSE resolution on item 22 & RESCIND the moratorium on parking enforcement for vehicle dwellings. We are overrun with RV dwellings in Venice that haven't moved since the pandemic started. Their run-off waste has proved hazardous with hard rains clogging our storm drains and what does drain goes into the Pacific. It's an environmental hazard that does no one a service including the RV dwellers, who need safe camping with hook-ups, services and more supervision. Two RVs near me have burned. This must end. Please oppose this motion to rescind!

Communication from Public

Name: Maria A

Date Submitted: 01/31/2022 08:46 PM

Council File No: 20-0291

Comments for Public Posting: For item 22. It's time to regulate vehicle dwellers again. There are RVs that have parked by parks and been set on fire (Penmar Park) There are RVs parked by schools with dwellers that are using drugs openly (westside neighborhood school and westminister elementary schools) It's time to rescind the suspension of parking enforcement for vehicle dwellings.

Communication from Public

Name: Heidi

Date Submitted: 01/31/2022 08:46 PM

Council File No: 20-0291

Comments for Public Posting: C'mon guys! This is getting ridiculous! People living in mobile homes are not homeless. They can move and they should move. Create safe parking and stop sacrificing neighborhoods.

Communication from Public

Name: Alex

Date Submitted: 01/31/2022 10:52 PM

Council File No: 20-0291

Comments for Public Posting: RVs in the middle of the city have proven hazardous to those occupying them as well as environmental dangers. The city can't just leave them unattended to and call it compassion. Politicians like my own councilman Bonin have talked for years of safe parking and never delivered. Enough is enough, RVs need to be moved to a place where they can properly dispose of waste and hook up to electricity without risky illegal hookups to city power which results in fires. Stop calling inaction compassion.

Communication from Public

Name: Neysa Frechette

Date Submitted: 01/31/2022 11:27 PM

Council File No: 20-0291

Comments for Public Posting: I recommend that City Council oppose the continuation of the moratorium on parking enforcement for vehicle dwellings. The long term build up of RV and car encampments at the Ballona Wetlands has resulted in unsafe conditions for RV dwellers and marsh visitors, along side documented significant environmental damage, habitat loss, and pollution. The City must open more RV parking lots and housing opportunities for folks to be able to move to safe locations where they can be provided with trash collection, restrooms, septic tank disposal, security, social and health services. Allowing these conditions to persist is not safe or healthy for any Angeleno, or the environment.

Communication from Public

Name: Warren Wibbelsman

Date Submitted: 01/31/2022 09:16 PM

Council File No: 20-0291

Comments for Public Posting: Please enforce parking restrictions and get RV's off public streets. I welcome providing parking facilities. I object to allowing consistent residence on the streets. I have seen rv encampments as magnets for drug use, unsanitary and dangerous conditions.

Communication from Public

Name:

Date Submitted: 01/31/2022 09:34 PM

Council File No: 20-0291

Comments for Public Posting: The time to start cleaning up our streets is now. Illegally parked RV's have created tremendously unsafe conditions, mountains of waste, fires, open air drug centers, unsafe streets, trash and garbage, dumping of feeds and urine into protected wetlands etc. etc. It was a complete shock to find out the council wants to extend this situation in our city. We are DONE! Please think very hard about the type of city you want this to be moving into the future. More of the same?

Communication from Public

Name: Kraig Metzinger

Date Submitted: 01/31/2022 04:36 PM

Council File No: 20-0291

Comments for Public Posting: Please do not extend the moratorium on illegal RV camping. These RV's are a public safety and health issue and should be relocated to designated areas with services. City Council must do better for these people who need more than a street or freeway underpass. Allowing them to stay is inhumane and hazardous.

Communication from Public

Name: Lucy Han

Date Submitted: 01/31/2022 04:49 PM

Council File No: 20-0291

Comments for Public Posting: Dear Councilmembers, We oppose the resolution on item 22 & ask you to rescind the moratorium on parking enforcement for vehicle dwellings. The moratorium, at times, has allowed almost 100 RV's & cars to be parked on Jefferson Blvd next to our Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve & Marsh. This reserve is one of the last significant freshwater wetland landscapes in coastal LA County. This habitat is home to endangered species like the Belding's Savannah Sparrow and the El Segundo Blue Butterfly. The unhoused are desecrating this culturally significant area which was once home to the Tongva Indian tribe. We have over 500 letters with wet signatures from constituents demanding that the City remove these vehicles as they are compromising the safety of the environment and community. There were over 80 LAPD calls to this location in 2021. The unhoused bath, defecate & fish in the marsh. The debris from this area goes into the Ballona Creek & into Santa Monica Bay. Wooden Pallet Houses are being erected. It seems there is a meth lab in an RV. Last year, an RV caused a 5 acre fire in the Wetlands. Firemen were not able to get to the fire hydrant because the RV was blocking it. Last year, 4 people were shot. Having the RVs here is not safe for anyone including the unhoused. Public nature classes are no longer held because it is too dangerous. LA is park poor due to all the urban development. Public recreational spaces are declining & must be preserved. Please help us protect our Wetlands & Marsh for all to enjoy. Please oppose the resolution on item 22 & ask you to rescind the moratorium on parking enforcement for vehicle dwellings. Thank you. Lucy Han President Friends of the Jungle

Communication from Public

Name: Tom Brewster

Date Submitted: 01/31/2022 04:58 PM

Council File No: 20-0291

Comments for Public Posting: Its time to enforce our laws regarding RV and car parking. We have seen the effects of letting a few have a free pass. It just escalates and gets worse ! This was a big problem before COVID. Stop using it as an excuse. Your job is to keep our neighborhoods safe and clean. Do your job !

Communication from Public

Name: Debra-Lynne Terrill

Date Submitted: 01/31/2022 05:13 PM

Council File No: 20-0291

Comments for Public Posting: Clean up our streets. I am sick and tired of being afraid to walk around my once-safe neighborhood that is now blighted with drug addicts and mentally ill occupants of RVs. Bonin resigned and the rest of you need to do the same.