



Annual Report 2018-2019

Friends of the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park

Email: info@friendsofthewildernesspark.org

Website: www.friendsofthewildernesspark.org



LEADERSHIP TEAM

Jim Pinter-Lucke, Chair and Signage Working Group leader

Charlie Gale, Second Saturday Water Coordinator

Terry Grill (March 2018 – February 2019), Signage Working Group leader

Nancy Hamlett, Treasurer and Invasive Plant Working Group leader

Meg Mathies, Communications and Secretary

Dean McHenry, Trails Working Group co-leader

Vicki Salazar, Volunteer Coordinator

Shawn Winnick, Trails Working Group co-leader

INTRODUCTION

Mission

The Friends of the Wilderness Park is a volunteer support group that was formed as a result of the *Master Plan for the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park* (Section IP 2.1 of the *Implementation Plan*). As described in that document, it was envisioned that the Friends would “assist with recruiting volunteers for various projects, engage with visitors on the trail to promote positive compliance with rules and trail courtesies, discuss issues of concern, share observations, and report to and coordinate with staff.”

The Friends of the Wilderness Park is a grassroots organization that works with the City of Claremont to help preserve the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park as an environmental resource, manage the park for passive recreation, and minimize the impact of park attendance on surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Purpose this report

The *Implementation Plan* further states that “In order to ensure the C&HS Commission is informed of CHWP issues, the ‘Friends’ will provide an Annual Report and Recommendations on user experience and park culture to the Parks, Hillside, and Utility Committee as well as the Community and Human Services Commission.” This report is submitted in response to that charge.

Historical Background

After approval of the *Wilderness Park Master Plan* in 2016, Human Services staff called two community meetings during the Spring of 2017 to initiate establishment of the Friends group. As recommended in the *Implementation Plan*, the Friends were initially “constituted of three subcommittees: (1) Docent and Community Interaction, (2) Service Projects and Park Maintenance, and (3) Environmental Preservation, Resource Management, and Master Plan Implementation.” A Steering Committee was established to oversee the organization.

(1) The Docent and Community Interaction subcommittee decided to develop a new survey of park users to collect current information that may be helpful in improving the CHWP and

that would also help educate park users about rules that are frequently ignored (or not understood). A draft survey was developed, but not implemented.

(2) The Service Projects and Park Maintenance subcommittee undertook to develop a coherent signage program for the park. They conducted an inventory of existing signage and made recommendations for sign standards for the park that would reduce sign pollution while clearly conveying essential information. They submitted a memo regarding signs, and their work continues under the reorganized Friends (see below).

(3) The Environmental Preservation, Resource Management, and Master Plan Implementation subcommittee established inventory, evaluation, and formulation of recommendations for unauthorized or ‘informal’ trails as its first priority, and identification, control, and removal of invasive plants as its second. Subcommittee members completed a survey of about half of the informal park trails. Completion of the Trails project and initiation of an Invasive Species Management program are two of our current activities, as described below.

After this promising beginning, however, no further meetings of either the Steering Committee or the general membership were held, and the subcommittee members felt adrift.

Current status

In early 2018 a few members of the original Steering Committee joined with several other interested individuals to revive the Friends group, and reconstituted themselves as the “Friends of the Wilderness Park Leadership Team”. This group has met monthly since March of 2018 and has reactivated several of the initial volunteer projects as well as instituting new ones. Rather than maintaining the original committee structure we have organized ourselves around specific projects, which are described in greater detail below. Since the summer of 2018, Fred Cervantes, Parks & Sports Coordinator, serves as the City’s liaison to the Friends and attends the Leadership Team meetings.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

- Our email distribution list currently numbers about 150 people who have signed up as being interested in volunteering for various projects.
- On April 14, 2019, we had a booth at Claremont's Earth Day celebration.
- We held an Annual General Meeting at the Hughes Center on May 1, 2019 which was attended by about 30 people.
- We have developed a website, including a blog. Please check it out at: www.friendsofthewildernesspark.org.
- The original *Master Plan* budgeted \$500 for the Friends of the Wilderness Park in their first year for T-shirts and supplies, and the City purchased T-shirts for the Friends for \$500. The *Master Plan* indicates a budget for the Friends of \$100/year thereafter.
- Members of the Leadership Team have personally contributed money for various expenses, e.g., a portable table, clipboards, laminated signs, banner, poster boards, trash pick-up materials, etc.



Recommendation:

- That a modest amount of money, \$500, be included annually in the CHWP budget to support the activities of the Friends of the Wilderness Park. (See page 15 for proposed 2019-2020 budget.)

SPECIFIC PROJECTS

Volunteers are currently engaged in four different areas, as described in the following sections (each written by the working group leader.)

(1) Second Saturday volunteer program – Vicki Salazar

The second Saturday volunteer program, which began in May of 2018, is a collaboration of the Friends of the Wilderness Park, CHWP Rangers, and City Staff. Our goals are to educate visitors about the park, establish a positive park culture, and encourage future participation with the Friends of the Wilderness Park.

For four hours on the second Saturday of each month, Friends' volunteers answer questions about the Park, provide directions (with a map that visitors can photograph), remind visitors adequate water for themselves and their dogs, give water and/or refillable water bottles (or a drink from a dog bowl) to those in need, and remind visitors about keeping dogs on leashes and not playing music out loud. Some volunteers also hike the loop, picking up trash and answering questions along the way.

Prior to each event, the Friends and Rangers coordinate parking and share information. On event day, the Friends, Rangers and volunteers meet for a short training session and then carpool together to the park.

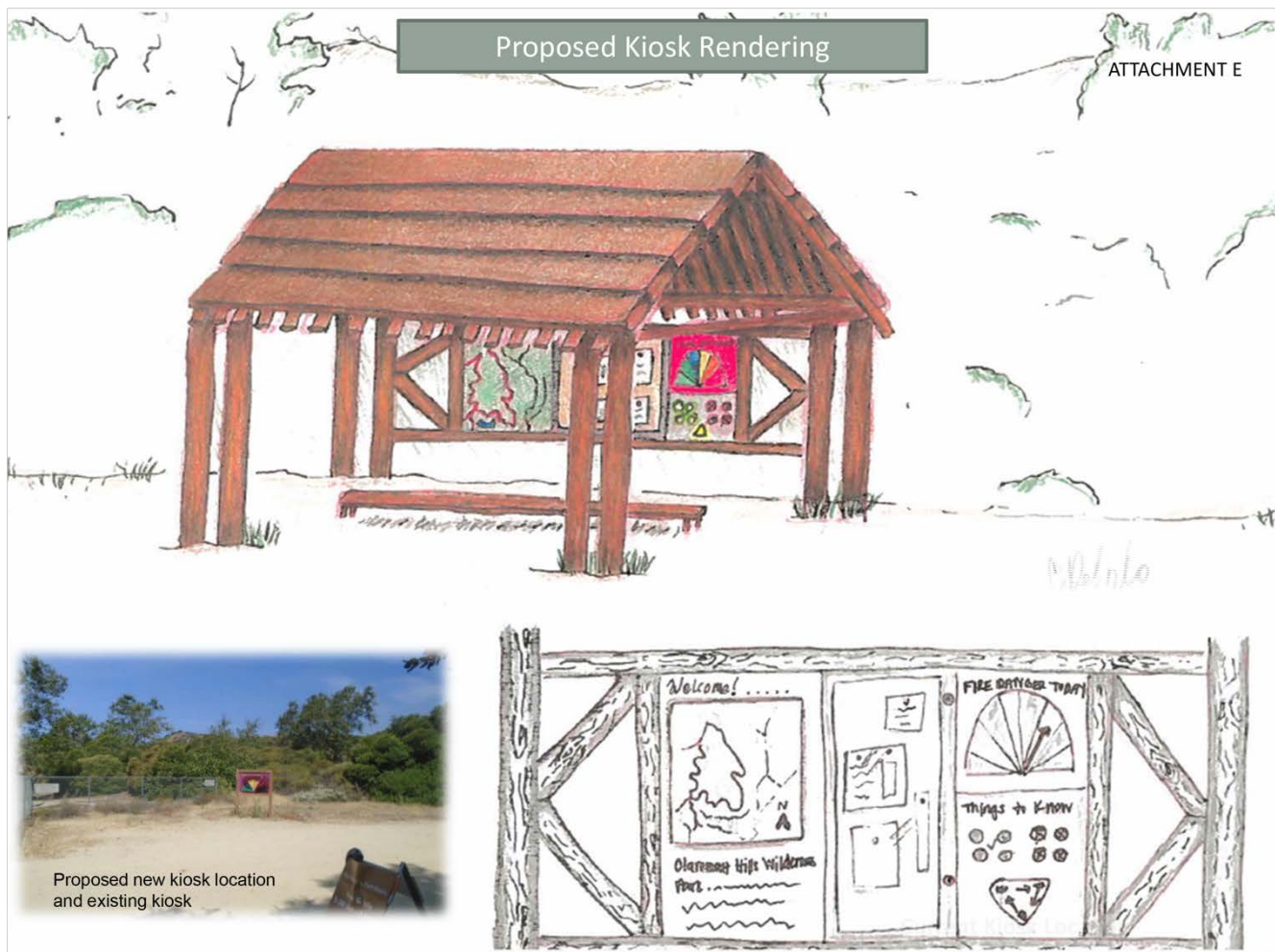
Together volunteers have contributed 140 hours within the park for the Second Saturday program from May 2018 through June 2019. These opportunities have given our volunteers a sense of purpose and focus for creating an environment that can be enjoyed by all.

We have been fortunate to receive T-shirts purchased by the City, water and water bottles donated by our local water companies, and contributions from the Leadership Team for supplies. These efforts were essential to our success and we look forward to more involvement from the community.

This past year has allowed us to learn more about the Park and what the Park means to visitors. We've seen firsthand the dedication of the Rangers and City Staff. These shared values will enable us to grow stronger as a group and a community. Each experience within



the Park brings us to the conclusion that it is necessary to have a kiosk with information at the entrance of the Park as soon as possible.



Recommendation:

- That a Kiosk including complete information be installed at the main (North Mills) entrance to the Park. This kiosk should include the following information: a map with color-coded trails and distances, elevation, history, plants, animals, insects, reptiles, birds, geology, park etiquette and rules. It should also include information about how to obtain a parking permit.

(2) Development of signage policies – Jim Pinter-Lucke

We have worked on a signage recommendation for over two years and will soon be forwarding a Master Plan for signage in the Wilderness Park. We have a survey of existing signs and suggestions of signs to be eliminated, recommendations for creating professional, consistent signage, and suggestions for signs at entrances to the park.

The first thing we noted about the park was that it was overrun with signs, which led us to inventory all signs and recommend those that might be eliminated. To streamline the signage, we developed a template for map-based signs to greet visitors at park entrances.

This template will do the following: Center on a clear map of the park with the map's location clearly delineated, list park hours, and list regulations in the park. The production of signs depends on the City finding funds. We are looking forward to such a development and working with the City Staff, particularly the Rangers, in making the signage more professional.

Claremont Hills Wilderness Park

Enter At Your Own Risk

Trail Guide

✓	Cobalt Canyon Mtn (XX miles)
✓	Barbark Mtn (XX miles)
✓	Johnson's Pasture Mtn (XX miles)
✓	Palmer Esry Mtn (XX miles)
✓	Gale Mtn (XX miles)
✓	BP&L Road / East Pomella Drive (XX miles)
✓	Dycamore Canyon Trail (XX miles)
✓	Thompson Creek Trail (XX miles)
✓	Connecting trails and roads (XX miles)

Los Angeles County Fire Station #82

No potable water along trails

Park Hours

January	6:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
February	6:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
March	6:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.
April	6:00 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.
May	5:30 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.
June	5:30 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.
July	5:30 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.
August	6:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.
September	6:30 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
October	6:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
November	6:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
December	6:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Visitors in violation of the hours may be subject to a citation.

Claremont City Ordinance (C.M.C. 11.10.120) Prohibitions

- Use of Park Outside Posted Hours
- Removing Vegetation
- Hiking or Biking off Trail
- Hunting / Trapping
- Alcoholic Beverages
- Excessive Noise / Amplified Sound
- Dogs off Leash

- Fires, Fireworks, Flammable Liquids
- Glass Containers
- Unauthorized Motor Vehicles
- Weapons, Firearms, or Air Soft Guns
- Littering
- Smoking

www.ci.claremont.ca.us

For more information or assistance, visit www.ci.claremont.ca.us or call Claremont Human Services Department at (909) 399-5490. After hours, call Claremont Police Department at (909) 399-5411.

Recommendation:

- That signs be installed at all Park entrances and access points. These signs should be smaller than, but similar in style to the main Kiosk and should contain a map of the Park.

(3) Evaluation of Unauthorized Trails – Shawn Winnick

The *Master Plan* states that the Friends will evaluate the unauthorized trails not only for environmental impacts but also for the extent that these trails enhance the user experience and will make recommendations about which unauthorized trails should be closed and which could be formally integrated into the trail network. At the Annual Meeting we discussed several of the pros and cons of opening these trails.

Drawbacks of opening the trails included risk of trampling vegetation, litter, increased erosion and subsequent run-off and edge-effect (edges of trails are very common places for invasive species to take root, and these trails might more quickly spread such species throughout the park)

Pros included useful short-cuts, steep and exciting downhill rides for cyclists, more exercise, more contact with the natural environment and more solitude by avoiding the crowded main loop and Johnson's Pasture trails. Additionally, some of the unauthorized trails lead to breathtaking views not otherwise easily visible from the main trail.

We discussed that there will likely be competing views as to which trails should be made accessible, and that we would work to ensure that all of these viewpoints were considered before any final decisions are made.

We agreed that there would likely be some trails that could easily be opened, others that would need significant maintenance prior to opening and still others that should be permanently closed.

While portions of the unauthorized trails had previously been mapped, photographed and cataloged, we agreed that the Friends sub-committee would liaison with two of the park Rangers assigned by Fred Cervantes to assist in further cataloging the trails prior to presenting this information to the larger group.



(4) Invasive species management – Nancy Hamlett

The *Master Plan* calls for management of invasive species, and one of the newly formed working groups focuses on this issue. As the *Master Plan* states:

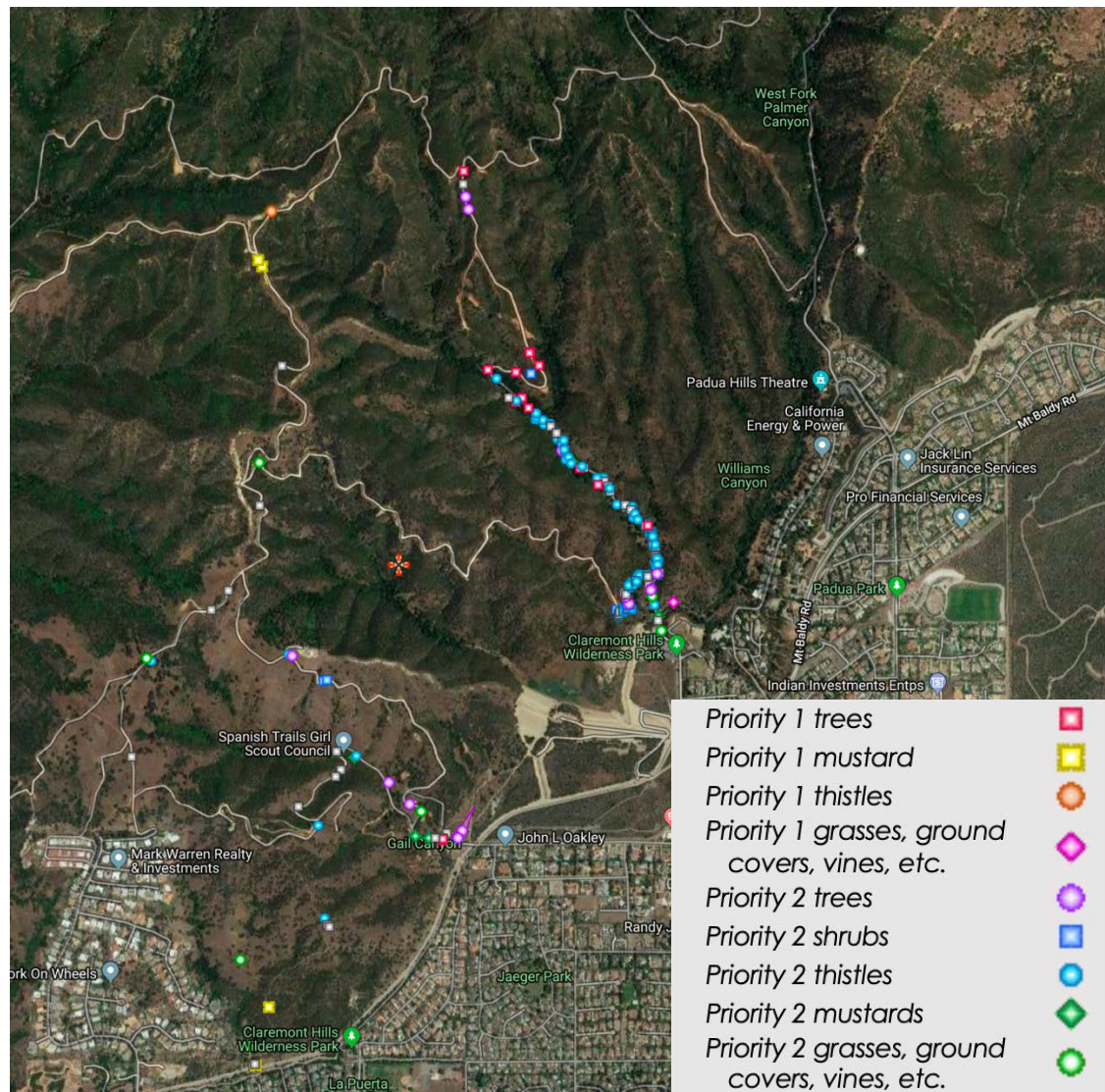
“Invasive plant species degrade native habitat and displace native plants and wildlife, increase wildfire potential; increase slope erosion potential; and degrade recreational opportunities. Therefore, invasive plant species control and management are important components to preserving the integrity of CHWP’s native habitat.” (Section 3.5.1, p 3-19)

The Invasive Plant Working Group (IPWG) currently has 14 members, many of whom have extensive experience in invasive plant species surveillance and management, as well as California native plants, with a number of organizations, including US Fish & Wildlife, the Irvine Ranch Conservancy, the Transition Habitat Conservancy, the Council for Watershed Health, the San Dimas Experimental Forest, the California Invasive Plant Council, and Bernard Field Station, the LA County Weed Management Area, and Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden. Progress as of June 2019 includes:

- *Mapping and identifying invasive plants in the Wilderness Park*
 - Using CalFlora and the Observer Pro app, we have developed a mapping protocol suitable for most invasive plants in the CHWP, and since summer 2018 we have mapped large sections, but not all, of the Wilderness Park, recording the identification, photo, number of plants, and location for each population found.
 - Our current protocol is not well suited for very pervasive species, such as most of the invasive grasses and Short-pod Mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*), which cover large



areas. We are in the process of developing a separate protocol for these species based on one used by US Fish & Wildlife.



- We have identified 21 invasive plant species in addition to the 22 listed in the *Master Plan* (Table 3-2) for a total of 43. We expect more to be found as mapping continues.
- Among the newly identified invasive plants are two of particular concern - Yellow Star-thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*) and Sahara Mustard (*Brassica tournefortii*). Both of these plants are given the highest possible rating by the California Invasive Plant Council for their severe ecological impacts and high potential for spread. Both of these plants are fairly recently arrived in our area, so control may be possible if quick action is taken.

- Because Yellow Star-thistle blooms in summer, we were able to map its occurrence in both 2018 and 2019. In 2018, we found a single infestation of approximately several hundred plants, but by 2019, the infestation increased to 10,000 or more plants and had grown to a much larger area and spread into another nearby area, demonstrating the serious consequences of letting this highly invasive plant go unmanaged.
- *Removal of invasive plants*
 - In summer 2018, we proposed a pilot volunteer event to remove the infestation of Yellow Star-thistles. The City, however, specified that no removal activities would be allowed until an Invasive Plant Species Management Plan was approved. In the intervening year, the large amount of rain and lack of management has allowed the Yellow Star-thistle infestation to increase by more than an order of magnitude, and increases in populations of other species have also been noted.
- *Developing a proposed management plan*
 - The IPWG is developing a proposed invasive species management plan to submit to the City. We currently have a first draft of the plan, including Background, Rationale, Management Overview and Approach, Goals and Objectives, Strategies and Control Methods, Specific CHWP Invasive Plants and their Control, Documentation and Assessment, Guidelines for Volunteer engagement, and References.
 - One hindrance in developing the management plan is the lack of information about sensitive species in the park. One goal of invasive species management is to protect sensitive species and habitats, but it is difficult to achieve this goal if we do not know what's there.



- After editing and addition of the Executive Summary and Acknowledgements, the proposed plan will be submitted to Human Services for review and additional editing. Once that is complete, it will be submitted to the Parks, Hillside, and Utilities Committee, and then to the Community and Human Services Commission, then the City Council (if deemed necessary).

Recommendation:

- **Allow the Friends to carry out invasive plant removal, at least for the most problematic species. This could be done on a pilot basis, if necessary.**
- **Approve the management plan expeditiously.**
- **Authorize or allow targeted surveys for sensitive species in the Wilderness Park.**



FINANCIAL STATEMENT

May 2018 – June 2019

BEGINNING BALANCE (May 1, 2018)

\$ 0.00

INCOME

Funds for T-shirts from City of Claremont	\$500.00
Donations from members of the Leadership Team	\$315.00
TOTAL INCOME	<u>\$815.00</u>

EXPENSES

T-shirts for volunteers	\$500.00
Safety vests for volunteers	\$12.95
Pickup & reach tools for trash collection	\$6.46
Domain registration & website hosting	\$48.00
G-suite (Email, web storage, etc.)	\$50.00
Earth Day registration	\$25.00
Banner for pop-up	\$60.64
Boards, tape, photo printing, etc. for displays	\$48.71
Laminated ID cards for high priority invasive plants	\$60.86
TOTAL EXPENSES	<u>\$812.62</u>

ENDING BALANCE (June 30, 2019)

\$2.38

IN-KIND DONATIONS:

<u>DONOR</u>	<u>ITEM(S)</u>	<u>COST OR ESTIMATED VALUE</u>
Leadership Team	Water	\$10
Leadership Team	Refreshments for annual meeting	\$45
Leadership Team	Portable table, clipboards	\$30
Golden State Water	6 months of water	\$45
Three Valleys MWD	80 reusable water bottles	<u>\$60</u>
TOTAL IN-KIND DONATIONS		\$190

ANTICIPATED EXPENSES 2019-2020

EXPENSES

10' × 10' Pop-up canopy, steel frame, with weights	\$465
Web hosting and domain registration	\$66
G-suite (email, web document storage)	\$72
Grabbers, trash bags	\$20
Plant press and supplies for voucher specimens	\$80
Foldable, reusable water bottles with logo	\$185
Laminated ID cards for invasive plants	\$60
Printing, posters, displays	\$50
Earth Day booth registration	\$25
July 4 th booth registration	\$25
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1048

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Provide a modest amount of funds to support the activities of the Friends group.
- 2) Construct an informational kiosk at the North Mills entrance to the Park.
- 3) Install smaller informational signs with Park maps at all Park entrances and access points.
- 4) Allow the Friends to carry out removal of the most problematic invasive species, on a pilot basis if necessary.
- 5) Approve the Invasive Plant Species Management plan expeditiously.
- 6) Authorize or allow targeted surveys for sensitive species in the Wilderness Park.

