Facebook Live forum on crime will seek solutions
By The Daily Press Editorial Board
Posted Aug 23, 2017 at 4:50 PM
Updated Aug 23, 2017 at 4:50 PM

We’ve all read and heard a lot about the violent crime wave sending shockwaves through San Bernardino County and the High Desert. Sheriff John McMahon has acknowledged the violent crime rate in the High Desert has risen by 20 percent over the first half of 2017. District Attorney Mike Ramos has vowed enough is enough, it’s time to look for solutions. First District Supervisor Robert Lovingood has pitched a sales tax increase to pay for more deputies, more prosecutors and more jail cells.

Meanwhile, Victorville Mayor Gloria Garcia has called for community prayer, while others have cried out for increased personal responsibility, more Neighborhood Watch groups and help from the state legislature.

What’s the solution? That’s the question of the hour. And that’s what the Daily Press will try to help everyone discover when it hosts a 90-minute Facebook Live community forum on crime at 10 a.m. Oct. 2.

Confirmed participants are Sheriff McMahon, DA Ramos, Supervisor Lovingood, Victor Valley College Trustee and businessman Joseph W. Brady and Daily Press Editor and Interim Publisher Steve Hunt. The mayors of all our area cities and town have been invited as well.

We all know how we got to this point: Laws such as AB 109 (prison release) and Proposition 47 (decriminalization of some felonies). And with Prop 57 passed last November, the exodus of violent criminals from our state prisons is expected to continue.

So how do we reverse the negative effects of early prison releases and Prop 47’s so-called catch-and-release Catch 22?
That’s what these public safety experts will be asked. Ramos, among others, has agreed that it is high time to craft solutions so that High Desert residents are safe again.

The Daily Press has documented the soaring murder rate, the latest death being that of 12-year-old Mikaya Walls of Victorville earlier this month.

What are the right steps we need to take as a region to turn the tide, lock up violent criminals and keep them there? How can we all work together to bring peace and safety to our neighborhoods and streets?

We hope you will join us on Oct. 2 for this important forum. You can tune into the broadcast by visiting
2 children among four dead in house fire in Bloomington

By Veronica Rocha

AUGUST 23, 2017, 3:55 PM

A man, woman and two children died when flames swept through a Bloomington home Wednesday, fire officials said.

The fire erupted about 7:30 a.m. in the 17900 block of Santa Ana Avenue, according to Eric Sherwin, spokesman for the San Bernardino County Fire Department.

When firefighters arrived, they found heavy smoke inside the 1,300-square-foot home.

“Neighbors advised that people were still inside the home,” he said.

Firefighters immediately searched the home and found an unconscious woman trapped inside. She was pulled from the home and loaded into an ambulance, but later died at a hospital, Sherwin said.

Fire crews continued their search of the home, where they found the man and two children.

It took firefighters 20 minutes to extinguish the blaze.

Arson investigators were looking into the cause of the fire, he said. Sherwin did not know whether the home was equipped with smoke alarms.

Authorities have not identified the victims, but Manuel Salinas told KTLA-TV that his sister, husband and her two children lived at the home.

“She was a nice person, she was motivated,” Salinas told the news station.

veronica.rocha@latimes.com

Twitter: VeronicaRochaLA

ALSO

Fire at auto repair shop knocks out power to hundreds of Montebello residents

Plumas County resident accused of setting fire that threatened Gold Rush town

Fire forces evacuations in Yosemite area, including the old Wawona Hotel

Copyright © 2017, Los Angeles Times

This article is related to: Fires, Yosemite National Park
LOCAL NEWS

2 children, 2 adults found dead in Bloomington house after fire

By ALEX GROVES and BEATRIZ E. VALENZUELA |
PUBLISHED: August 23, 2017 at 8:56 am | UPDATED: August 23, 2017 at 8:20 pm

The bodies of four people, including two children, were found Wednesday, Aug. 23, following a house fire in Bloomington, according to officials.

The second child was found hours after the adults and a young girl died, according to San Bernardino County sheriff’s officials. Officials confirmed the second child to be another young girl.

“It’s so tragic. We never know what tomorrow is going to bring,” said Patsy Lara, a minister who lives in the area who was driving along Santa Ana Avenue and noticed firefighters pulling a woman, one of the victims, from the home in the 17900 block of Santa Ana Avenue.

Lara comforted a woman who arrived at the scene worried one of the three dead could have been a family member.

“(San Bernardino County Sheriff’s investigators) wouldn’t tell her anything yet,” Lara said after she embraced the woman in black and offered her prayers of encouragement.
As of Wednesday afternoon, sheriff’s spokeswoman Jodi Miller characterized the probe as a death investigation — meaning authorities hadn’t yet determined whether the deaths were accidental or homicidal.

The fire was reported just after 7:30 a.m. on Santa Ana Avenue near Locust Avenue – less than a block from Bloomington High School, according to San Bernardino County Fire Department spokesman Eric Sherwin.

Neighbors told arriving firefighters people may be inside the home, Sherwin said, and rescuers began searching for victims.

They entered the home and found one woman hurt and unresponsive. As they continued to search, they found the man and girl dead, Sherwin said. Initial information given was that the man was taken to the hospital, but that was later clarified.

Paramedics performed CPR on the woman at the scene and as they took her to Kaiser, where she ultimately died, officials said.

The Office of the Fire Marshal and San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department bomb and arson detail were at the scene of the fire, Sherwin said. It wasn’t known Wednesday morning what may have sparked the blaze.
Although Lara does not know the family, she said she drove by the home a few days ago and noticed what appeared to be a child's party taking place.

Kim Sanchez, who lives in the neighborhood, says it was rare to see the family outside.

Aside from the traffic because of the school, she said it’s a very quiet neighborhood.

“It’s devastating because I have little ones myself,” she said about the fire.

The California Highway Patrol had been requested to close off both sides of Santa Ana Avenue around the fire.

Traffic spilled over into Slover Avenue a block north as people who usually take Santa Ana are forced to take a new route.

Several kids on their way to school have had to go around the crime scene tape.

Officials were asking anyone with information about how the fire might have started to contact We-Tip at 1-800-472-7766.
LOCAL NEWS

Colonies prosecutor says no ‘big-shot exception’ to bribery law

Colonies defendants Jeff Burum, left, and Jim Erwin, far right, speak with legal consul as they return to a hearing in San Bernardino Superior Court. File photo. GABRIEL LUIS ACOSTA/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER.

By JOE NELSON | jnelson@scng.com and RICHARD DEATLEY | rdeatley@scng.com | San Bernardino Sun
PUBLISHED: August 23, 2017 at 7:44 pm | UPDATED: August 23, 2017 at 11:14 pm
Telling jurors in the San Bernardino County-Colonies corruption case “there’s no big-shot exception to the bribery law,” a prosecutor said Wednesday that hundreds of thousands of dollars in contributions from a developer to county officials’ political action committees can only be explained as payoff for approval of a $102 million court settlement 11 years ago.

Deputy State Attorney General Melissa Mandel said the November 2006 Board of Supervisors 3-2 vote that favored Rancho Cucamonga developer Colonies Partners LP in its lawsuit over flood basin costs and damages against San Bernardino County was reached because the accused were on the take.

“I don’t think we’ve heard an explanation that points to innocence,” Mandel said in her rebuttal arguments to defense attorneys in the San Bernardino courtroom of Judge Michael A. Smith.

Jurors for three defendants — Jeff Burum, Paul Biane and Mark Kirk — went into deliberations Wednesday afternoon but reached no verdicts. They are expected to resume Thursday. A separate jury for Jim Erwin is expected to start deliberations Thursday after a rebuttal closing argument from Mandel.

Defense attorneys have long maintained that $400,000 in total contributions to political action committees in the months following the settlement was an effort to “mend fences” and rebuild political bridges following a contentious 5-year legal battle between the county and Colonies Partners over flood control work at Colonies’ 434-acre residential and commercial development in Upland.

All the defendants — Burum, a co-managing partner of Colonies; Biane, a former county supervisor; Kirk, the chief of staff for then-Supervisor Gary Ovitt; and Erwin, a former assistant assessor — have all denied any wrongdoing and said the PAC contributions were legitimate, public and transparent.

Development at Colonies’ property continued long after the settlement, and Burum had to maintain good relationships with local elected officials for the sake of that ongoing project and other future projects he was involved in, the defense argued.

Mandel chipped away at that explanation Wednesday, contending several points did not fit that narrative.
Bill Postmus, who was chairman of the Board of Supervisors at the time of the settlement and who along with Biane and Ovitt voted to approve the settlement, was already working as county assessor when his two political action committees, Conservatives for a Republican Majority and Inland Empire PAC, each received $50,000 contributions from Colonies Partners in June 2007.

Postmus was also heavily addicted to methamphetamine, and in May 2007 — one month before Postmus's PACs received the Colonies Partners contributions totaling $100,000 — Erwin, then working as assistant assessor for the county under Postmus, sent an interoffice memo to Postmus demanding he enter a drug rehabilitation program or he would inform the county administrative office, Mandel said.

Erwin subsequently resigned his position as assistant assessor on Oct. 31, 2007.

Postmus, initially a defendant in the case, entered into a plea agreement with prosecutors in March 2011, pleading guilty to 10 felonies in the Colonies case and a companion corruption case in which he was convicted of using taxpayer money to fund a political operation out of the Assessor's Office for political gain. He agreed to testify against the defendants at trial per the terms of his plea bargain.

Kirk's PAC, Alliance for Ethical Government, received a $100,000 contribution from Colonies Partners in May 2007. Kirk was just a chief of staff for Ovitt at the time, but was considering a run for county supervisors and had a campaign account already set up, to which Colonies never contributed, Mandel said.

“What's the explanation that points to innocence for giving a drug-addicted assessor, a chief of staff, and all these others $100,000? Where's the explanation that points to innocence?” Mandel asked jurors.

She said Burum lied to the press in 2009 about knowing who was responsible for controlling the PACs, or who served on their committees, and said he only contributed based on what they were pitching him.

“There whole mending fences, building bridges ... that's a new narrative. Not in 2009,” Mandel said. “Of course you can't mend fences and build bridges with people you don't know.”

Among other areas Mandel hit was Burum's alleged tactics of intimidation and instilling fear in people to get what he wants, which prosecutors allege trickled down to Postmus, Biane and various county officials including Biane's former chief of staff Matt Brown and county Supervisor Josie Gonzales. Mandel also said in-house and outside county attorneys Mitch Norton, Ruth Stringer, Dennis Wagner, Tom Malcolm, Paul Watford, and Ron Reitz were “mocked, belittled, and humiliated” and placed in “agonizing ethical dilemmas.”
Mandel noted that prosecution witnesses Postmus and former county Assistant Assessor Adam Aleman both requested escorts to court because they feared Burum, that Biane had said that Burum used intimidation to get what he wanted, and that witness Matt Brown told authorities he was putting dog food in his trash because he feared Burum would send private investigators to dig through his trash to find something incriminating to use against him, as Burum is alleged to have done with Postmus and Biane.

Although the defense maintains that Postmus, Biane and Ovitt approved the settlement because they felt it was reasonable and averted a “$300 million freight train” in damages “coming down the tracks,” Mandel said both Postmus and Biane acknowledged the settlement was not a good deal. In an October 2011 interview with the FBI, Postmus said, ‘We were being bent over big time on this one,” and that he could not justify the $102 million settlement.

Postmus also told the FBI agents that while he felt there was no quid pro quo, he knew he was going to be taken care of politically and in future business ventures in return for approving the settlement, Mandel said.

Mandel encouraged jurors to use their common sense and to pay attention to what the defense has been saying “over and over and over again.”

“I think when you spend a little time with it and think about it, I think it's going to make sense to you,” Mandel said. “If something doesn't add up, it can't be excused as politics as usual.”

She said local, state and federal officials were told by a county insider that political officials were being played “like pawns in a chess game.”

“You job is to make a decision as to whether these men — Jeff Burum, Paul Biane, Jim Erwin, and Mark Kirk — did the things they are charged with doing, that is your job,” Mandel said in an impassioned plea to jurors. “That's all your job requires.”

Judge Smith, who following Mandel's closing rebuttal said the trial was one of the longest he's ever seen, gave Burum's, Kirk's and Biane's jury instructions before sending them into the jury room to begin deliberating.

Erwin has a separate jury because some of the evidence against him is not admissible against the other defendants.

“And now, it is up to you to review all of the evidence, to independently review and evaluate the evidence, and determine whether the evidence is sufficient to prove any or all of the charges to be true beyond a reasonable doubt or not,” Smith told the jurors.
Interior Secretary Zinke won’t eliminate any national monuments

In this July 10, 2015, file photo, trees frame Lake Berryessa with California’s newest national monument in the background near Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument, in Calif. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said he’s recommending that none of 27 national monuments carved from wilderness and ocean and under review by the Trump administration be eliminated. (AP Photo/Eric Risberg, File)

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS |
August 24, 2017 at 9:04 am

By MATTHEW BROWN and BRADY McCOMBS
BILLINGS, Mont. — Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said he’s recommending that none of 27 national monuments carved from wilderness and ocean and under review by the Trump administration be eliminated.

But there would be changes to a “handful,” he said.

Zinke told The Associated Press that unspecified boundary adjustments for some monuments designated over the past four decades will be included in the recommendations he planned to give President Donald Trump on Thursday. None of the sites would revert to new ownership, he said, while public access for uses such as hunting, fishing or grazing would be maintained or restored.

He also spoke of protecting tribal interests and historical land grants, pointing to monuments in New Mexico, where Hispanic ranchers have opposed two monuments proclaimed by President Barack Obama.

Zinke declined to say whether portions of the monuments would be opened up to oil and gas drilling, mining, logging and other industries for which Trump has advocated.

There was no immediate comment from the White House.

If Trump adopts the recommendations, it would quiet some of the worst fears of his opponents, who warned that vast public lands and marine areas could be lost to states or private interests.

But significant reductions in the size of the monuments, especially those created by Obama, would mark the latest in a string of actions where Trump has sought to erode his Democratic predecessor’s legacy.

“There’s an expectation we need to look out 100 years from now to keep the public land experience alive in this country,” Zinke said. “You can protect the monument by keeping public access to traditional uses.”

The recommendations cap an unprecedented four-month review based on a belief that the century-old Antiquities Act had been misused by past presidents to create oversized monuments that hinder energy development, grazing and other uses.

The review raised alarm among conservationists who said protections could be lost for areas that are home to ancient cliff dwellings, towering sequoia trees, deep canyons and ocean habitats. They’ve vowed to file lawsuits if Trump attempts any changes that would reduce the size of monuments or rescind their designations.

Zinke had previously announced that no changes would be made at six national monuments — in Montana, Colorado, Idaho, California, Arizona and Washington. He’s also said that Bears Ears monument in Utah should be downsized.
The former Montana congressman declined to reveal specifics on individual sites in an interview with the AP. He offered no further details on his recommendations for the two New Mexico monuments — Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument and the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument.

He also struck back against conservationists who had warned of impending mass selloffs of public lands by the Trump administration.

“I’ve heard this narrative that somehow the land is going to be sold or transferred,” Zinke said. “That narrative is patently false and shameful. The land was public before and it will be public after.”

National monument designations add protections for lands revered for their natural beauty and historical significance with the goal of preserving them for future generations. The restrictions aren’t as stringent as national parks, but some policies include limits on mining, timber cutting and recreational activities such as riding off-road vehicles.

The monuments under review were designated by four presidents over the last two decades. Several are about the size of the state of Delaware, including Mojave Trails in California, Grand-Staircase Escalante in Utah and Bears Ears, which is on sacred tribal land.

Many national monuments were later declared national parks. Among them were Zion National Park in Utah and Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona.

No other president has tried to eliminate a monument, but some have trimmed and redrawn boundaries 18 times, according to the National Park Service.

Many times, presidents reduced monuments only slightly, like when Franklin Roosevelt removed about 52 acres from Arizona’s Wupatki National Monument in 1941 to make way for a dam. But occasionally the changes were drastic, like President Woodrow Wilson’s move in 1915 to cut Mount Olympus National Monument roughly in half to open more land for logging.

Environmental groups said the 1906 Antiquities Act is intended to shield significant historical and archaeological sites, and that it allows presidents to create the monuments, but only gives Congress the power to modify them.

---

Tags: environment, Top Stories IVDB, Top Stories OCR
LOS ANGELES — Five California national monument areas may be axed or downsized by the Trump Administration on Thursday. They are among 27 national monuments established or expanded by presidents since 1996 that Trump in an executive order asked Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to review. Here's a quick look at the state's areas that could lose some or all of their protected status.

MOJAVE TRAILS NATIONAL MONUMENT

This huge swath of Mojave Desert north of Joshua Tree National Park is by far the largest of California's six national monuments up for elimination, and also the most recently designated. President Barack Obama gave the status to 1.6 million acres of desert land in February, 2016. It contains ancient lava flows, spectacular sand dunes, ancient Native American trading routes and World War II-era training camps. It also contains the largest remaining undeveloped stretch of historic Route 66.

SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS NATIONAL MONUMENT

The 346,000-acre mountain area is some of the nation's most visited wilderness. More than 15 million people live within a 90-minute drive of the mountains northeast of Los Angeles. It was designated by Obama in person in October, 2014 and came in a wave of similar moves by the president, who would use national-monument status to protect millions of acres of public lands around the country in his last years in office. The move brought criticism from California Congressmen and others who said the president was overstepping his authority.

GIANT SEQUOIA NATIONAL MONUMENT

President Bill Clinton created this national monument in 2000, setting aside 328,000 acres of land in Tulare County where the giant sequoia grows naturally. The move added to the areas already safeguarded in Sequoia, Kings Canyon and Yosemite national parks. The decision was praised by environmentalists but scorned by loggers. In announcing his decision, Clinton marveled at the resilience of a partially charred tree that had been struck by lightning decades ago. "Look how deep the burn goes," he said. "These giant sequoias clearly are the work of the ages. They grow taller than the Statue of Liberty, broader than a bus."

BERRYESSA SNOW MOUNTAIN NATIONAL MONUMENT

This area 50 miles west of Sacramento was given national monument status by Obama just over two years ago. The monument, consisting of 330,000 acres of public lands, extends from Berryessa Peak and other areas in Napa, Yolo, and Solano counties through Lake, Colusa, and Glenn counties to the eastern boundary of the Yuki Wilderness in Mendocino County. It is home to threatened and endangered plant and wildlife species including northern spotted owls.

CARRIZO PLAIN NATIONAL MONUMENT

Far less visited is this area in San Luis Obispo County, which is known for its remoteness and silence. The national monument created by Clinton in 2001 consists of 204,000 acres of grasslands between San Luis Obispo and Bakersfield. It includes Painted Rock, a horseshoe-shaped sandstone monolith with red ochre etchings of horned figures and geometric shapes drawn by American Indians.
We applaud Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke’s decision that no changes should be made to the Sand to Snow National Monument here in the Inland Empire.
Let's hope that decision, announced last week, was a preview of the decisions to follow on the fate of other Southern California monuments as the review period ends today.

Mojave Trails National Monument and San Gabriel Mountains National Monument are the two other local monuments under review as a result of President Trump's April 26 executive order.

“Today, I am recommending that no changes be made to the Sand to Snow National Monument and that the Monument is no longer under official Department of the Interior review,” Zinke announced in an Aug. 16 statement. “The land of Sand to Snow National Monument is some of the most diverse terrain in the West, and the monument is home to incredible geographic, biologic, and archaeological history of our nation.”

The same might be said of Mojave Trails, which was granted monument status under the Antiquities Act by President Barack Obama in February 2016, at the same time that Sand to Snow and Castle Mountains national monuments were created. (Castle Mountains NM is too small to be included in the Interior Department's review.)

San Gabriel Mountains received monument status in October 2014. The 346,179-acre monument is unique in being essentially an urban-adjacent outdoor wonderland, within a 90-minute drive of 15 million people in the Los Angeles Basin.

In our view, neither of these monuments should be reduced in size — and certainly neither should lose its national monument status or protections.

That's what's at stake in the Interior Department's review of 27 monuments created since 1996, including six in California. More than 1.2 million comments were logged on the Regulations.gov website during the public comment period. So far, Zinke has recommended no change to five monuments in addition to Sand to Snow, and issued an interim report recommending that Bears Ear National Monument's boundaries be reduced.

For their recreational, geologic and historic value — and for the increased tourism that monument designation provides — Southern California's monuments should all retain their status and boundaries.

Tags: editorials
Review of monuments’ designation justified

By Rep. Paul Cook

As you might recall, former President Obama unilaterally designated two monuments in our area despite significant local opposition, doing so through misuse of the Antiquities Act. The creation of a Mojave Trails monument has been debated for some time, and a local consensus was reached on its boundary. Still, after colluding with special interest groups and performing a single fly-over in an airplane, Obama created a much larger monument and did so without a public meeting or public comment. He created another monument, Castle Mountains, out of thin air by that same abusive process.

You might also have heard attack ads against me and President Trump, implying that we seek to destroy these monuments. (They neglect to mention that I support fully a third monument, Sand to Snow.) If you’re skeptical of their message, you should be. It’s a complete lie on multiple levels. My position on Mojave Trails has never changed: The President should abide by the bipartisan boundaries established in my desert bill and Senator Feinstein’s desert bill. My position on Castle Mountains has never changed: no monument should be created without public input.

Anyone or any entity supporting Obama’s abuse of the Antiquities Act is supporting the dirty closed-door politics that Washington, D.C. has given us for too long. We shouldn’t accept the absurd notion that a single politician should determine the fate of your livelihood, community, and region without your input — that somehow he knows best. Furthermore, opposing Obama’s abuse of the Antiquities Act does not mean opposition to protecting public lands.

I support smart conservation, with monuments created through a thorough public vetting process. That’s why I introduced desert legislation in 2015 (HR 3668) and again in 2017 (HR 857), because we deserve a sensible approach to conservation that includes input from Congress and the public. While drafting these bills, I’ve worked with countless stakeholders — including the
aforementioned environmental groups and other environmental groups with better integrity — to ensure that land protections meet the demands of local economies, recreationalists, and conservationists. This resulted in significant support locally.

The county of Inyo and cities of Apple Valley, Banning, Barstow, Big Bear Lake, Hesperia, Twentynine Palms, and Yucca Valley endorsed my proposal because it protected public access to Mojave Trails. I even mailed a survey to tens of thousands of households in my district to see if a monument or a less restrictive designation was preferred for Mojave Trails. A plurality of the 2,500 survey responses supported a less restrictive designation (47% to 44%).

Instead of protecting the 965,000 acres of Mojave Trails as addressed in Feinstein’s legislation and my own, Obama drew a staggering 1.6 million-acre boundary. To make matters worse, Obama created the Castle Mountains National Monument to stop a mining project that environmental extremists have long despised. In fact, the actual Castle Mountains — an interesting topographical feature — could have been protected without drawing the boundary so large as to prevent the mining operation. In both cases, Obama used the Antiquities Act to circumvent public scrutiny.

That’s why President Trump asked Department of the Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to issue recommendations on modifying Mojave Trails and Castle Mountains national monuments. It’s ironic that these extreme environmental groups and their Congressional advocates claim there was a “backroom” deal between Trump and mining companies in determining the fate of these monuments — ironic because a backroom deal occurred between these environmental groups and Obama in creating the monuments. I believe a Freedom of Information Act request would prove my statement true, because some members of these same groups insinuated such collusion in speaking to my staff. Moreover, Zinke’s review allowed for public comment; Obama’s actions did not.

No one side should have free reign in the discussion of public land use, but we haven’t seen a balanced approach in decades. Had Obama and his special-interest supporters chosen good public process in determining these monuments, the Trump administration would not be reviewing their misdeeds. Obama threw 553.5 million acres of public land into national monuments, nearly twice as
much as all previous presidents combined. We should never assume one person in government, given that much power, has acted properly in every case. No presidential action is above review.

By BRIAN ROKOS | brokos@scng.com | The Press-Enterprise
PUBLISHED: August 23, 2017 at 7:21 pm | UPDATED: August 24, 2017 at 7:28 am

San Bernardino Police Department Officer Gabe Garcia will be retiring from the job that he loved. Garcia was shot in the head in August 2014 and spent weeks in a coma, and though he still faces limitations, he has made great strides. (Photo by Stan Lim, The Sun/SCNG)
San Bernardino police Officer Gabe Garcia was so respected that after he was gravely injured in a shooting in 2014, some of the criminals he had busted wrote him letters from jail, wishing him a speedy recovery.

“I never treated any thugs like thugs. I treated them like people,” Garcia said.

It was never personal for him, Garcia explained.

“I loved being a cop. It was my favorite thing to do. It was fun. I liked helping people. That's what brought me a lot of joy,” he said.

Garcia, 34, spoke in the past tense about his career in an interview Wednesday, the day before he was scheduled to be honored at a retirement luncheon at the San Bernardino Police Department and the day after the shooting's three-year anniversary.

Garcia's father, Ron, a retired San Bernardino police captain, said Gabe died twice in the early-morning hours of Aug. 22, 2014, and a radio station even posted a Twitter message announcing Garcia's death.

- **Related:** Community unites around San Bernardino police officer in critical condition

“Nope, still here,” Garcia said Wednesday, laughing.

**Recovering, and moving on**

Doctors initially told the family he wasn't likely to survive his injuries, and when he did, they still weren't sure how much he'd recover.

Six months after the shooting, he was walking haltingly, as if in a minefield, his speech was slurred and he struggled to express complex thoughts.

Now, his strides are faster and stronger. His speech is clearer, and he is able to engage in longer conversations.
However, he still suffers some paralysis on his right side. He walks with a brace on his right leg and shakes hands with his left hand. And Garcia sometimes asks his father for help with questions whose answers he knows, but can't quite summon.

The physical limitations, and a settlement with state Worker's Compensation that Ron Garcia said will leave his son and 7-year-old granddaughter financially secure, pointed Gabe to retirement at this time.

“I'm not ready to (retire), but it's almost a necessary thing,” Garcia said. He also didn't want to take up a spot in the department's personnel budget.

“We agree it's bittersweet,” said Gabe's mother, Lydia. “It's time to move on.”

‘Never give up’

The night of the shooting, Garcia, a field training officer, was on patrol with probationary officer Marcus Pesquera. They came upon a group of people gathered around a car. Both officers stepped from their patrol car to see what the group was doing and one of the men opened fire, striking Garcia in the head.

Pesquera returned fire and killed the gunman, Alex Alvarado, 38. Pesquera received the Medal of Valor from the Police Department and Gov. Jerry Brown for his actions.

The three men who were with Alvarado but did not fire weapons — Jonathan Contreras, Orlando Cruz and Gonzalo Medina — all pleaded guilty to assault on a peace officer with a firearm. Each was sentenced to 15 years in prison, according to San Bernardino County Superior Court records.

The Garcias said they don't know the names of the shooter or his accomplices because they've been focused on Gabe's rehabilitation.

- Related: One year after shooting, Garcia making ‘inspirational’ recovery |
  Photos

The five-times-a-week therapy sessions have been reduced to one day a week. Garcia hits the gym every morning, trying to increase strength in his right side. He rides a stationary bicycle for 20 miles most nights. And Garcia and his father do speed walks many days. He lives with his parents in Yucaipa.

Garcia's next goal, he said, tapping the brace, “is to get rid of this.”
“It’s been a pretty hard road, but like I always say, ‘Never give up.’ There are goals that I set that I’ve accomplished, but it doesn’t stop me from setting other goals,” he said.

Garcia said his plans in retirement are uncertain. He speaks to police academy classes and will make himself available for other appearances where telling his story would be instructive.

**The will to survive**

The speeches help Gabe with his speaking and thinking skills, his father said. Gabe’s most important message, Ron Garcia said, is about the subconscious will to survive.

That determination was so strong that doctors had difficulty putting Garcia to sleep so they could treat him. He finally went under when his mother encouraged Gabe to let the doctors do their work.

“We believe that he believed so deeply that he was going to survive. It’s something buried so deeply inside his core. ... I think it’s so strong in him that it took over,” Ron Garcia said.

The message to the cadets is to talk about surviving, to believe it.

“Don’t wait for something to happen to try to have that kick in,” Ron Garcia said. “That’s not how it works. It’s something you have to believe so strongly that it’s part of your DNA. That way, when the lights go out, that will hopefully take over.”

The Garcias said they are ready to move on from the tragedy, as best as they can. On Tuesday, they had their annual anniversary dinner with the family of Pesquera, Garcia’s partner, and the subject of the shooting hardly came up.

“He’s always going to be able to walk the hallways and stand tall,” Ron said.

Said Lydia: “There will be better things ahead. We don’t know what they are.”
LOCAL NEWS

New logo unveiled for Ontario airport


By LISET MARQUEZ | lmarquez@scng.com | Inland Valley Daily Bulletin
PUBLISHED: August 23, 2017 at 3:14 pm | UPDATED: August 23, 2017 at 3:20 pm

ONTARIO >> It took a while but Ontario International Airport finally has an official logo.
Ontario airport has been under local control since Nov. 1, when Los Angeles World Airports handed over operations to the Ontario International Airport Authority.

Since then, the four-member commission has worked to add new flights and improve operations at the twin terminals.

In a move to establish its own identity, the authority will launch a marketing campaign in the fall primarily aimed at attracting travelers in Southern California.

Commissioners also agreed Tuesday to brand it as “Southern California's preferred alternate airport.”

“I think this is overdue,” said Commissioner Curt Hagman. “We need to get the logo on our vehicles and in the airport and get people to start to recognize us after nine months. To recognize that this airport has changed.”

Interim CEO Mark Thorpe said at Tuesday’s monthly commission meeting the facility hasn’t been marketed or advertised in the region for the past 10 years.

“We will be pretty easily the most aggressive airport in Southern California marketing this airport,” Thorpe said.

Commissioners approved two new logos for the airport. One logo is square and features the airport’s three-letter code – ONT on top with the image of a white airplane over the O in ONT. Beneath that is the wording Ontario International Airport.

A similar version of the logo, which can be used for national advertising, will have “Southern California” at the top.

“Having ONT like LAX, and SFO, having all these different nicknames for an airport, gets you on the map,” Hagman said. “It puts us up there with the bigger players.”

The second logo is horizontal and spells out Ontario International Airport over two lines. The logo highlights the airport code by using dark blue lettering on the ONT portion. On this version, the plane is at the end of the logo followed by a white trail that intersects the wording.
Commissioner Ron Loveridge, who was presiding over the meeting in president Alan Wapner’s absence, said the “smoke line” was a little it shocking to him.

Thorpe said the goal was to have a plane in the image and in a digital ad, the plane could fly across the logo.

Consultant Gail Guge, who owns Guge Marketing along with Fraser Communications, handled the logo development. Guge said the idea behind the new logo and branding was to create a visual identity for the airport and to showcase what Ontario airport has to offer Southern California versus the other airport choices.

Out of the discussion with the focus group, the tag line that came out on top was “So Cal. So Easy.”

“They liked having the personality, that it wasn’t so stuffy,” she said. “It’s easy here and it is Southern California, we can have a little bit of personality in how we talk about the airport.”

The other tag lines: ‘Easy come. Easy go.’ and ’Where the flying is easy.’ will also be used on advertising campaigns.

The main message not only draws on the ease of using the airport, but alludes to the lack of freeway traffic getting to the airport.

“It is an opportunity for Ontario Airport – why you should try us,” Guge said. “We’re not leaving that to chance, we’re taking the opinions of people who use this airport to help us frame the best benefit.”

She added everyone in the focus group was complimentary of the airport.

“When more flights are available, there’s really no competition in their mind. This is where they want to go,” she told commissioners.

Loveridge asked that the authority to evaluate the effectiveness of tag lines at a meeting in December. Commissioners Jim Bowman and Hagman agreed.

“The idea is to always come and look, and test to see if you’ve been effective with those taglines – you recalibrate those quite a bit,” Thorpe explained.

---

Tags: airports, Inland Empire, Top Stories IVDB, Top Stories Sun
VICTORVILLE >> As Southwest Airlines prepares to place into service the newest version of the Boeing 737 aircraft line, the company is retiring its Boeing 737-300s from service, sending most to a company at Southern California Logistics Airport.
On October 1, Southwest will initiate service with Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft.

As part of the fleet change leading up to Oct. 1, Boeing is retiring 67 of its older 737-300 aircraft, sending most of the 737-300s to Victorville for storage “until future transaction plans are finalized for each aircraft,” said Brian Parrish, a Southwest Airlines spokesman.

The last revenue flight for the 737-300s will be on Sept. 29, Parrish said.

Southwest has not flown scheduled service with the 737-300s into Ontario International Airport or any airport in California since early this year, Parrish said.

On its internet site, SCLA-based ComAv says it offers “a fully integrated solution for asset owners wishing to maximize value and return while managing short storage and reactivation or long term storage and end of life solutions.”

ComAv does not discuss its clients, a spokeswoman said.

Eighteen 737-300 have already landed at Southern California Logistic Airport, said Sue Jones, spokeswoman.

“We are excited that the Southwest’s 737 MAX 8 will fly into ONT in the future,” Parrish said. The airport is not of the initial markets when Southwest begins revenue service with the MAX on Oct. 1.

Southwest began deliveries of the 737-300s continuously since 1984, “so our fleet is of varying ages as we acquired new aircraft throughout the years,” Parrish said.

Southwest Airlines is the world’s largest operator of an all-Boeing fleet.

The MAX 8 offers an increased takeoff payload and a 14-percent improved fuel burn than the current newest aircraft in its feet, the Boeing 737-800, according to a Southwest “Meet the MAX” fact sheet.

The aircraft can fly up to 500 nautical miles farther than the 737-800, the fact sheet said.

Southwest Airlines has 34 direct daily flights from ONT to the following: Chicago (Midway), Denver, Las Vegas, Oakland, Phoenix, Portland, Sacramento, San Jose and many more cities with a transfer in the cities already mentioned, said Jesse Perez, ONT station manager.
Water contaminant to cost Chino $5 million

By Erin Tobin | Posted: Saturday, August 19, 2017 8:00 am

The Chino city council approved an emergency resolution to spend up to $5 million in a contract with RC Foster Corporation of Corona to begin water treatment services for the contaminant 1,2,3 Trichloropropane (1,2,3 TCP) at the Eastside and Benson water treatment facilities.

The Eastside water treatment facility is located at 7537 Schaefer Ave. in Ontario. The Benson facility is located at 11840 Benson Ave., Chino.

“That’s a lot of money,” councilman Earl Elrod muttered when the council started discussing the matter during the Aug 15 council meeting.

According to Jose Alire, the assistant city manager and public works director, if the city went through the normal “design, bid, build” process, it would be unable to meet new regulations from the State Water Resources Control Board established July 18 regarding the monitoring of 1,2,3 TCP.

“Our traditional ‘design, bid, construction’ process consistent with the public code cannot be utilized as the city will not be in compliance by the time frame provided by the state,” Mr. Alire said.

These new regulations would require cities to monitor the amount of 1,2,3 TCP in city water, and ensure the contaminant does not exceed the maximum level of five parts per trillion.

According to Chino’s water quality report for 2016, the city’s water currently includes the chemical at an average level of 47 parts per trillion, though the range stretches from 6.6 to 76 parts per trillion, depending on the individual water sources.

The regulations are set to go in effect on Jan. 1, 2018. If the city doesn’t bring the level of 1,2,3 TCP in the water down to five parts per trillion by March 31, 2018, it will be found to be in violation of the California Safe Drinking Water Act.

“This is an emergency item that we need to comply with so we don’t face fines from the state,’ Mayor Eunice Ulloa said.

The city did ask for bids on the project through Bidplanet.com. It received two bids, and RC Foster Corporation was the lowest bidder with a bid of $4,518,500. An additional $481,500 was set aside for unforeseen costs. The money will be drawn from the reserves of the water fund to cover the costs of the project.

During the Aug. 15 council meeting, Mayor Ulloa questioned Mr. Alire on why steps weren’t taken sooner.

“(The state board) has been working on this for several years but we didn’t know the time frame or when they were going to implement it,” he said. “We had a pretty good idea this would happen in July. We were requesting extensions based on public contract code requirements, but they denied these requests.”

1,2,3 TCP has been classified as a carcinogen by the state. The chemical, which is a by-product of the plastic making process, was a popular ingredient in pesticides during the 1980s. After the pesticides were
sprayed, 1,2,3 TCP would seep into the groundwater.

“Basically any community that had any kind of intensive farming has this problem?” Mayor Ulloa asked Mr. Alire, who confirmed she was correct.

According to Mr. Alire, Chino’s current treatment process doesn’t filter out 1,2,3 TCP. So the city plans to add an additional treatment step to the Benson and Eastside facilities by adding liquid-phase, granular activated carbon (LGAC) skid mounted vessels. These vessels treat the water through the use of carbon in a format similar to the way at-home water filters work, pulling the contaminants out of the water.

The council previously approved a similar treatment for 1,2,3 TCP at Well 16, which supplies water to the southeastern part of the city, towards College Park and Magnolia.

“We are trying to get ahead of it, make sure we treat for this and that we continue delivering quality water to our residents,” Mr. Alire said. “It’s going to be a lot of work in the next four months and we have to make sure we do not fail.”

According to the memo prepared by Chino’s public works department, to keep with the rules regarding an emergency resolution, the council must review the emergency action at every subsequent council meeting and approve its continuance by a yes vote until the work is done or the emergency is over.
Council approves $10.5 million grant from San Manuel

By Charles Roberts | Posted: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 4:03 pm

The city of Highland got in early on grants offered by the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, scoring a total of $10.5 million.

The Highland City Council approved the agreement Tuesday night at its regular meeting.

The largest of the three grants will provide over $9 million to rebuild Victoria Avenue from Highland Avenue to Third Street, long overdue, especially the south end of the project.

Victoria Avenue will not only benefit the cities of Highland and San Bernardino, but also San Bernardino International Airport.

In addition, it will provide an important link between the San Manuel Reservation and property owned by the tribe in and around the airport.

Other grants will buy a new fire engine for Highland, plus “fire apparatus and equipment purchases, including new breathing equipment.

Also at the Tuesday meeting, the Council approved expedited permitting for electric charging stations for electric vehicles, and approved a long-awaited ordinance regulating the placement and use of cargo storage units.

The Highland Family YMCA presented its annual report showing over 6,000 members and a growing list of programs and services offered at its Central Avenue facility in the Jerry Lewis Community Center.
How Redlands is using data to repair streets, sidewalks, water pipe

A truck drives on a recently paved road on Church St. near the corner of Pioneer Ave., in the Redlands, Ca., Wednesday, August 23, 2017. This new paving was part of the city’s Pavement Accelerated Repair Implementation Strategy, or PARIS, program. The city is about two projects away from completing the five-year paving program, which will see two thirds of city streets repaved or repaired. (Photo by John Valenzuela/Redlands Daily Facts)

By SANDRA EMERSON | semerson@scng.com | Redlands Daily Facts

PUBLISHED: August 23, 2017 at 3:40 pm | UPDATED: August 23, 2017 at 4:03 pm
Five years since launching its comprehensive street resurfacing program, the city continues to use data to address infrastructure needs.

About 330 lane miles of streets have been resurfaced through the Pavement Accelerated Repair Implementation Strategy, or PARIS, based on a host of data collected about the city's streets, from their condition to traffic volume.

“It's purely a scientific, mathematical approach to this and it's difficult to argue (against) that,” said Chris Diggs, director of the city's Municipal Utilities and Engineering Department.

**A SCIENTIFIC APPROACH**

The first five years of the PARIS project aimed to rehabilitate two-thirds of the city's streets, or nearly 430 lane miles.

But how did the city decide which streets made the cut?

Staff looked at street condition, proximity to high traffic areas, the amount of daily traffic volume and other criteria. They used that data to create a matrix ranking the repairs.

The city then secured funding through county sales tax revenue, loans, bond sales and water, wastewater and solid waste rates to address these streets before their condition could escalate and therefore become more costly to repair.

“Every single street was assessed on its miles and its conditions and it was just math,” Diggs said. “That was wonderful for us from an engineering perspective. There was no favoritism, no anything. It was just the math.”

The city is preparing to go to bid for the final two street resurfacing projects.

“It's pretty exciting when you know the No. 1 complaint that the city was receiving was pot holes,” Diggs said.

The data-driven approach to PARIS is the same one the city has applied to addressing other infrastructure needs, including sidewalk and pipeline repairs. Decision-making rooted in data analysis is a main component of the city's Smart Redlands initiative, which supports innovative ways to provide services and address the needs of residents, today and in the future.
“Often we talk about what services can we offer to address or mitigate the residents’ concerns,” Diggs said. “For example, if you have a graffiti problem, well we’ll come up with an app so you can report your graffiti. That’s not the solution to water lines, to paving, to sidewalks, to any of these data-driven types of projects we can work on.”

The answer to infrastructure breakdowns is not merely treating the symptom, he said, but preventing the problem in the first place. The city can do more than fix a water leak, for example, it can replace the pipe and prevent the water leak altogether.

“That really is the heart of what we’re trying to address here,” Diggs added. “Not addressing the symptom that we see. Remove that problem before the community recognizes there is a problem. That is the best service that you could provide.”

Before PARIS, about 83 miles of streets were repaired from 2007 to 2013. At the time PARIS was presented to the City Council, the condition of pavement in the city was well below county and state averages.

The city of Redlands recently completed paving work on Pioneer Avenue east of Orange Street. This was part of the city’s Pavement Accelerated Repair Implementation Strategy, or PARIS, program, Wednesday, August 23, 2017. The city is about two projects away from completing the five-year paving program, which will see two thirds of city streets repaved or repaired. (Photo by John Valenzuela/Redlands Daily Facts)

Seeing the need for a more comprehensive approach, MUED staff got to work, not only on collecting the data but truly understanding the city’s streets.
While planning for the project, the city hired a firm to train staff on the anatomy of a street, how to improve them and the most cost-effective methods for doing so, Diggs said.

“I don't imagine you're going to find another city who, especially this size, is investing in understanding the anatomy of a street the way we are,” Diggs said. “That I think was super beneficial to understand the ... methodologies that we used based on degradation of the streets, based on the traffic load, based on this science.”

WHAT'S NEXT

The city will have about nearly 150 lane miles of streets that were not addressed before or during the initial five years of PARIS. Of those miles, about 45 or so are not in need in repair, Diggs said.

The remaining 100 miles, however, includes several streets on the south side of town where clay-based soil is prevalent, meaning they will be more expensive to repave.

While the city works to repay its loans for PARIS, it will continue to take in Measure I sales tax revenue, utility and solid waste rate revenue and state funding that could be used toward addressing the remaining street work.

“This I think given the volume of streets and the dollars we have I would say somewhere four, five, six years (in the future) we should be able to complete the remaining streets,” Diggs said.

Mayor Paul Foster said if he or other council members were asked about their biggest accomplishments in recent years, PARIS would be at the top of the list along with balancing the city's budget.

“To the public, that’s something they saw every single day,” Foster said. “Every time they went out on a street they saw how bad it was.

“Now,” Foster continued, “as we've gone through these last few years and will continue over the next 18 months or so to repair the streets, we're consistently hearing from the public, and I know my council colleagues are as well, people are just floored at how nice it is to drive around town.”

BY THE NUMBERS

• 620: The number of street lane miles in Redlands

• 430: The number of street lane miles to be repaired under PARIS 2013-2018
83: The number of street lane miles paved before PARIS from 2007-2013

105: The number of street lane miles remaining after 2018
Manuka Makai Luau at Lake Gregory September 2nd

Come out and enjoy an evening in the islands at Lake Gregory Saturday, September 2.

By Susan A. Neufeld
Crestline, CA – Are you ready for an escape to the islands? Lake Gregory is presenting a Luau on the shores of the lake. The event will be from 6:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., Saturday, September 2.

The Luau will have hula dancing, spellbinding drummers, show stopping fire-knife performer and a magnificent Hawaiian feast. Celebrate the spirit of aloha with authentic traditional luau foods that blend Hawaiian, Polynesian and Asian-influenced flavors.

The evening will begin with rhythmic drums of Tahiti and the haunting echo of the conch shell as Na Pualei Ohana, “the cherished family” takes you on an unforgettable visual journey through the islands of Polynesia.

TICKETS

Seating is limited to 300 people. Tickets are $58 per person (tax and service charge included) Tickets are going fast. To reserve your place at the luau visit: https://fareharbor.com/lakegregoryrecreation/items/29212/.

MENU

The Authentic Island Luau Menu will consist of:

Kalua pork, Teriyaki chicken steamed rice, Hawaiian style potato/macaroni salad, Chinese style shredded cabbage salad, banana bread, champagne punch and signature adult refreshments will be available for purchase at the bar.

Comments are closed.
LOCAL NEWS

Mosquito variety that can carry West Nile discovered in Chino Hills

FILE – In this Jan. 18, 2016, file photo, a female Aedes aegypti mosquito acquires a blood meal on the arm of a researcher at the Biomedical Sciences Institute in the Sao Paulo’s University in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The Aedes aegypti can spread the Zika virus, which is spreading in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean and usually causes a mild illness but is now suspected in an unusual birth defect and possibly other health issues. One was recently discovered in Chino Hills. (AP Photo/Andre Penner, File)

By STEVE RAMIREZ | stramirez@scng.com | San Gabriel Valley Tribune
PUBLISHED: August 23, 2017 at 12:11 pm | UPDATED: August 24, 2017 at 8:05 am
Mosquitoes, with all the viruses they can carry, can be some of the most deadliest animals, according to the World Health Organization.

And one of the most-dangerous variety again have hovered in the area.

The Aedes aegypti, which can carry West Nile virus, dengue, and Zika virus, were detected in Chino Hills on Monday, Aug. 21, the West Valley Mosquito and Vector Control said in a news release.

An Aedes aegypti was found in a trap near Slate Drive and Agate Road, West Valley vector control reported. The organization was alerted after receiving a complaint from a resident.

This is not the first time this mosquito has been detected in the area. An Aedes aegypti was discovered in Colton on June 16, 2016. The species is not native to California.

The San Bernardino County Department of Public Health reported in July, 2016, that five county residents had tested positive for Zika. But all were infected abroad.

The West Valley vector control said that the mosquitoes have white bands on their legs and most lay eggs on the side of tires, fountains, plant pots and bird baths and other similar areas. Prevention, the release said, can be achieved by dumping standing water and by frequently changing pets’ water bowls or dishes.

Tags: mosquito, Top Stories IVDB, Top Stories PE, Top Stories Sun

Steve Ramirez
Stephen Ramirez has been a sports writer for this newspaper since 1989. He has covered a variety of sports, including college football, motor sports and high schools. His favorite sports teams are the Rams, Dodgers, Kings, Lakers and UCLA football and basketball. He also has a passion for Cal State Fullerton (alma mater) baseball.

Follow Steve Ramirez @SteveRRamirez
The Case for Sharing All of America's Data on Mosquitoes

The U.S. is sitting on one of the largest data sets on any animal group, but most of it is inaccessible and restricted to local agencies.
For decades, agencies around the United States have been collecting data on mosquitoes. Biologists set traps, dissect captured insects, and identify which species they belong to. They’ve done this for millions of mosquitoes, creating an unprecedented trove of information—easily one of the biggest long-term attempts to monitor any group of animals, if not the very biggest.

The problem, according to Micaela Elvira Martinez from Princeton University and Samuel Rund from the University of Notre Dame, is that this treasure trove of data isn’t all in the same place, and only a small fraction of it is public. The rest is inaccessible, hoarded by local mosquito-control agencies around the country.

Currently, these agencies can use their data to check if their attempts to curtail mosquito populations are working. Are they doing enough to remove stagnant water, for example? Do they need to spray pesticides? But if they shared their findings, Martinez and Rund say that scientists could do much more. They could better understand the ecology of these insects, predict the spread of mosquito-borne diseases like dengue fever or Zika, coordinate control efforts across states and counties, and quickly spot the arrival of new invasive species.
That’s why Martinez and Rund are now calling for the creation of a national database of mosquito records that anyone can access. “There’s a huge amount of taxpayer investment and human effort that goes into setting traps, checking them weekly, dissecting all those mosquitoes under a microscope, and tabulating the data,” says Martinez. “It would be a big bang for our buck to collate all that data and make it available.”

Martinez is a disease modeler—someone who uses real-world data to build simulations that reveal how infections rise, spread, and fall. She typically works with childhood diseases like measles and polio, where researchers are almost spoiled for data. Physicians are legally bound to report any cases, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) compiles and publishes this information as a weekly report.

The same applies to cases of mosquito-borne diseases like dengue and Zika, but not to populations of the insects themselves. So, during last year’s Zika epidemic, when Martinez wanted to study the Aedes aegypti mosquito that spreads the disease, she had a tough time. “I was really surprised that I couldn’t find data on Aedes aegypti numbers,” she says. Her colleagues explained that scientists use climate variables like temperature and humidity to predict where mosquitoes are going to be abundant. That seemed ludicrous to her, especially since organizations collect information on the actual insects. It’s just that no one ever gathers those figures together.
Together with Rund and a team of undergraduate students, she found that there are more than 1,000 separate agencies in the United States that collect mosquito data—at least one in every county or jurisdiction. Only 152 agencies make their data publicly available in some way. The team collated everything they could find since 2009, and ended up with information about more than 15 million mosquitoes. Imagine what they’d have if all the datasets were open, especially since some go back decades.

A few mosquito-related databases do exist, but none are quite right. ArboNET, which is managed by the CDC and state health departments, mainly stores data about mosquito-borne diseases, and whatever information it has on the insects themselves isn’t precise enough in either time or space to be useful for modeling. MosquitoNET, which was developed by the CDC, does track mosquitoes, but “it’s a completely closed system, and hardly anyone has access to it,” says Rund. The Smithsonian Institution’s VectorMap is better in that it’s accessible, “but it lacks any real-time data from the continental United States,” says Rund. “When I checked a few months ago, it had just one record of Aedes aegypti since 2013.”

“That’s why we came up with this idea of a national surveillance system,” Martinez says. “The U.S. government should make it a requirement for mosquito-control boards to send in their data.”

―Data should be made available without having to justify exactly what’s going to be done with it.‖

Some scientists who work on mosquito control apparently disagree, and negative reviews have stopped Martinez and Rund from publishing their ideas in prominent academic journals. (For now, they’ve uploaded a paper describing their vision to the preprint repository bioRxiv.) “Some control boards say: What if people want to sue us because we’re showing that they have mosquito vectors near their homes, or if their house prices go down?” says Martinez. “And one
mosquito-control scientist told me that no one should be able to work with mosquito data unless they’ve gone out and trapped mosquitoes themselves.”

Other scientists aren’t convinced that collating the data would be useful. “To predict an outbreak, a national database would be of no use,” says Lyle Petersen, who directs the CDC’s Division of Vector-Borne Diseases. “Mosquito density is very, very local. Knowing what’s going on with mosquitoes in California isn’t going to help you with what’s going on in Illinois. The data from even one part of a city may be totally irrelevant to another.”

**Micah Hahn**, an epidemiologist at the University of Alaska Anchorage, feels differently. She says that a national mosquito database “would be extremely useful for public health-planning and emergency response”—but creating one would be a logistical nightmare.

“There are hundreds to thousands of independently operating vector-control units—some not more than a guy and truck in rural areas—with varying levels of human resources and computer savvy,” she says. They vary in which traps and baits they use, whether they count males as well as females, and whether they identify insects down to the species or genus. Merging such disparate data would be hard, and there’s no quality-control system in place for checking it.

**Roxanne Connelly**, an entomologist at the University of Florida, agrees. “As a researcher, I’d love to have access to a nation-wide mosquito surveillance database and have often wished for such a system in Florida,” she says. But after 17 years of experience, she thinks that “trying to standardize the data, for the past or in for future, is going to be almost impossible.”
Martinez agrees that this is the biggest obstacle to creating the database of her dreams—but she doesn’t see it as a deal-breaker. She and Rund argue that many states have already taken steps toward building open databases. Iowa, for example, makes all its mosquito data freely available. “At a minimum we are advocating for stringing these systems together,” they say.

“Data should be made available without having to justify exactly what’s going to be done with it,” Martinez says. “We should put it out there for scientists to start unlocking it. I think there are a ton of biologists who will come up with cool things to do.”

From The Web

Zillions of Dollar Shave Club Members All Say the Same

This App Can Teach You a Language In 3 Weeks

There's A Reason Amazon Doesn't Want Women To Know

The 2017 Volvo V90 Cross Country is Anything but Boxy
LA’s response to homeless encampments ‘isn’t working,’ councilman says

By Donna Littlejohn, LA Daily News

and Elizabeth Chou, Los Angeles Daily News

Wednesday, August 23, 2017

Amid rising homelessness and mounting outcry from residents and business owners, a Los Angeles city councilman said Wednesday he wants to take a hard look at the way the city responds to the increasing presence of encampments and recreational vehicles.

“What we have isn’t working,” Councilman Mitchell Englander said.

In recent months, the issue of homelessness has become inescapable, with residents encountering more homelessness in their neighborhoods, according to the councilman, who represents the northwest San Fernando Valley.

“There’s not a conversation I have — whether it’s fixing a street, trimming a tree, walking to school or going to a grocery store — where we don’t talk about homelessness,” he said.

Out of Los Angeles City Councilman Joe Buscaino’s office: “Ditto,” said spokesman Branimir Kvartuc.

“We’re very, very conscious of it,” Kvartuc said. “It’s a battle every day.”

Englander also has been hearing concerns from city officials tasked with enforcing rules around encampments and recreational vehicles, he said.

San Pedro has battled similar issues, with encampments rooted around the community’s historic post office and waterfront overlook park, though Kvartuc points out that other parts of the city, such as Venice, have much bigger problems with homelessness.

Robert Nizich, an attorney with offices inside San Pedro’s main post office, sends out a round-robin email featuring daily photos of the sidewalk and park scene outside his office windows.

“The condition grows worse daily, and nothing is done to permanently solve the issue,” he wrote in a recent email. “New faces pop up just like their tents. Whack a mole does not work. A consistent and sustained effort on a daily basis is required.

His intent with the emails, which go out to city and business leaders every day, is to keep the issue front-and-center until authorities find a permanent solution to a situation he and others say is ruining the town.

“Basically, they occupy the street,” Nizich told the Daily Breeze in a January 2016 interview. “If they’re told to move, they move to the park (across the street), then back again — it’s an ebb and flow, like the ocean.”

According to Englander, Los Angeles police officers, along with transportation and sanitation officials, say “the resources we have and the ordinances we have in place need help and fixing.”
Los Angeles voters recently passed a pair of tax measures expected to bring in more money to build housing and provide services to the city’s growing homeless population. But some say changes are happening too slowly.

Residents and business owners have taken to social media, such as the Saving San Pedro Facebook page, and in some cases submitted petitions and organized protests to demand that city leaders enforce existing city policies that are aimed at removing illegally erected encampments and hauling away large vehicles that are improperly parked on city streets.

Saying he wants to treat the issue of homelessness as a crisis, Englander on Wednesday responded with four motions that will take a “comprehensive look at current rules and methods” for addressing homelessness in Los Angeles.

He said he wants to pair this examination of the city’s enforcement policies, with efforts to get more homeless people into housing and set up with jobs.

Two of the motions introduced Wednesday are aimed at re-evaluating a recently adopted policy for regulating homeless encampments.

The city last year began enforcing an ordinance known as 56.11, which sets up rules for “the storage of personal property in the public right of way.” It requires that city officials give advance notice before taking down homeless encampments and removing other personal property that blocks public sidewalks and areas.

That ordinance was “enacted to create a balance of the needs of the public to access clean and sanitary public areas consistent with their intended uses” with the needs of people who are homeless and “have no other alternatives for the storage of personal property,” according to one of the motions.

Some city leaders have complained that under the 56.11 regulation, homeless encampments are merely taken down in one place and set up soon after in another location nearby.

An effort to set up a storage facility near an elementary school in San Pedro failed last year amid an uproar of protests. The issue, at the request of LAPD’s Harbor Division, will be revisited soon, Kvartuc said, with the police station in San Pedro offered as a potential location.

Englander and Buscaino are calling for sanitation and Police Department officials to give “an overview of which aspects of the ordinance have worked, which aspects have not worked as well” and the effect that ordinance has had on “Los Angeles city communities.”

In a second motion on the issue, Englander says he wants to look into making HOPE teams, which are made up of police officers who work with sanitation workers to remove and cleaning up encampments areas that are illegally set-up, a permanent LAPD program.

Similar complaints also have been made about a city ordinance that allows people to live out of recreational vehicles. The city earlier this year began enforcing an ordinance that bans living out of cars and recreational vehicles along residential streets and near parks, schools and day cares. RVs used for dwelling purposes can only be parked in commercial and industrial areas.

With this ordinance set to expire early next year, Englander and Councilwoman Monica Rodriguez say it should be evaluated.

Meanwhile, Englander and Councilman Bob Blumenfield, whose district includes the West Valley, are looking into other methods to regulate recreational vehicles.

In their motion, the council members are calling for an “analysis of the best practices and ordinances of other local municipalities regarding the permitting, restricting and/or banning RV parking on public streets.”
Since 2010, city officials have responded to complaints about RVs by posting signs on certain streets to prevent the parking of “oversize vehicles” during the early morning hours from 2-6 a.m.

“When oversize parking restriction signs are installed, however, the vehicles often move to nearby streets until they are also posted,” the motion reads. “Communities continue to experience a proliferation of these vehicles, and the current program has provided a piecemeal approach to the problem.”
Hunting a Killer: Sex, Drugs and the Return of Syphilis

Outbreaks of a deadly, sexually transmitted disease confound health officials, whose obstacles include drug shortages, uneducated doctors and gangs.

By JAN HOFFMAN  AUG. 24, 2017

OKLAHOMA CITY — For months, health officials in this socially conservative state capital have been staggered by a fast-spreading outbreak of a disease that, for nearly two decades, was considered all but extinguished.

Syphilis, the deadly sexually transmitted infection that can lead to blindness, paralysis and dementia, is returning here and around the country, another consequence of the heroin and methamphetamine epidemics, as users trade sex for drugs.

To locate possible patients and draw their blood for testing, Oklahoma’s syphilis detectives have been knocking on doors in dilapidated apartment complexes and dingy motels, driving down lonely rural roads and interviewing prison inmates. Syphilis has led them to members of 17 gangs; to drug dealers; to prostitutes, pimps and johns; and to their spouses and lovers, all caught in the disease’s undertow.

“Syphilis doesn’t sleep for anyone,” said Portia King, a veteran Oklahoma state health investigator. “We have 200 open cases of sex partners we’re looking for. And the spread is migrating out of the city.”
It took months for investigators to realize Oklahoma City had a syphilis outbreak. Last fall, the juvenile detention center reported three cases — a boy and two girls, the youngest, 14. The center had never had a syphilis case in seven years of testing for it.

Investigators were mystified: The teenagers did not know each other, live in the same neighborhood or attend the same school.

Then, in February, a prison inmate tested positive. In interviews, he listed 24 sex partners — some his own, others the so-called pass-around girls for gangs, usually in exchange for heroin or methamphetamine. Contact information from the Entertainment Manager, as he called himself, pointed the way to a syphilis spread that, by March, led health officials to declare an outbreak, one of the largest in the country.

Although syphilis still mostly afflicts gay and bisexual men who are African-American or Hispanic, in Oklahoma and nationwide, rates are rising among white women and their infants. Nearly five times as many babies across the country are born with syphilis as with H.I.V.

Syphilis is devilishly difficult to contain, but may be even more so now. Because most doctors haven’t seen a case since the late 1990s, they often misdiagnose it. The cumbersome two-step lab test is antiquated. Although syphilis can be cured with an injection, there has been a shortage of the antibiotic, made only by Pfizer, for over a year.

And funding for clinics dedicated to preventing sexually transmitted diseases is down. In 2012, half of state programs that address sexually transmitted infections experienced reductions; funding has largely stayed flat since then. The Trump administration has proposed a 17 percent cut to the federal prevention budget.

Nearly 24,000 cases of early-stage syphilis, when the disease is most contagious, were reported in the United States in 2015, the most recent data. That was a 19 percent rise over the previous year. The total for 2015, including those with later-stage disease, was nearly 75,000, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
The way to shut down an outbreak is to locate all the sex partners of people who are infected and persuade them to get tested, treated and disclose other partners. That task has fallen on a handful of the health department’s disease intervention specialists.

This most recent wave of infections, spread through gang networks and prostitution rings, has made their jobs not only difficult but also dangerous.

**Danger and Determination**

Erinn Williams, the lead field investigator for the Oklahoma City outbreak, drove slowly down a one-lane gravel road curtained by overgrowth and bristling with barbed wire and “No Trespassing” signs.

Ms. Williams, 39, life-seasoned by an Alaska upbringing, Air Force training and two small daughters, usually makes these visits alone. She keeps her baby’s car seat in the back, to allay suspicions that she may be an undercover police officer.

“What you do is your business,” she tells the wary. “I’m here because I care about your health.”

She is accustomed to stopping by houses with locks punched out; to being warned off by drug dealers; to wearing comfortable shoes, the better to run away in.

She pulled up to a clearing. Across a ragged lawn, she could see a battered blue trailer surrounded by pickup trucks and a stand of trees. Access was blocked by an iron fence, monitored by video cameras.

Ms. Williams pushed a call button. “Hi, I’m here from the health department. Can I talk to you? I have some news.”

A young woman hesitantly crossed the grass. For months she had avoided health workers. Once, an investigator spotted her slipping in through a side entrance to her mother’s house; at the front door, the mother denied that her daughter was there.

Fresh-faced, her blonde hair in a ponytail, the woman looked healthier than most people Ms. Williams visits, with their grayish skin, abscesses and mottled
Ms. Williams was gentle but direct: “Your blood test results came back. It’s positive for syphilis.”

The woman buried her face in her hands. “I’m so embarrassed,” she sobbed. (Bound by confidentiality rules, Ms. Williams did not disclose her name.)

“Is that why my baby died?” she asked.

Ms. Williams nodded affirmatively.

“Can my kid get it? We sometimes share the same glass.”

No, Ms. Williams said. Just your sexual partners.

The woman insisted she had slept with only two men that year — her boyfriend and her ex, the father of the baby who had died.

Ms. Williams, who knew the woman’s Facebook page revealed many friends in a gang central to the outbreak, asked her to think carefully about whether there were more. We never reveal your name, she said, just as we cannot tell you who gave us yours.

The woman shook her head.

It was time to coax the woman into treatment. Just an injection and you will almost certainly be cured, Ms. Williams said, offering to drive her to the clinic. Her boyfriend too, Ms. Williams added.

He wasn’t around, the woman said, but she promised they would be there in the morning.

Are you sure you don’t want to go now? Ms. Williams asked.

Again, the woman shook her head.

Reluctantly, Ms. Williams got in her car and drove away.
An Elusive Killer

Syphilis, caused by bacteria, has been well known for centuries, *chronicled as a scourge* since at least the 1400s.

In 1932, the United States government began the ignominious “Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male” to observe the progress of the disease in black Alabama sharecroppers. Although penicillin had become accepted as the cure by 1945, Tuskegee researchers left the men untreated until 1972, when the study was shut down.

By then, largely because of treatment and public education, syphilis was disappearing. A generation of physicians rarely learned to recognize it firsthand.

But with the AIDS epidemic, syphilis surged, peaking around 1990. It was most common — and still is — among men who had sex with men, often those whose H.I.V. status made them vulnerable to other sexually transmitted infections.

Once again, public health campaigns sent syphilis into retreat. By 2000, only 5,970 cases were reported in the United States, the lowest since 1941, when reporting became mandatory.

But in the last few years, it has crept back.

Here in Oklahoma City, 199 cases have been connected so far this year. More than half the patients are white and female. The youngest girl is 14; the oldest man, 61. Three stillbirths have been attributed to syphilis and 13 of the infected were pregnant women.

Rare permutations are now more common. *Ocular syphilis*, which can strike at any stage of infection, often appears as blurred vision and reddened eyes. *Congenital syphilis* can cause deformed bones in newborns.

Many people never suspect they have the disease. Early symptoms, including genital lesions and, later, rashes on palms and soles, have led patients and health care providers to mistake it for herpes or allergic reactions. The disease can lie dormant for decades and then affect the liver, joints, blood vessels.
Once people are treated, though cured, they will almost always test positive. It is difficult to know whether a positive result indicates a new infection. After transmission, the bacteria may take three months to register. Those who test negative may have the disease.

This spring the Centers for Disease Control called for educating doctors and nurses about symptoms, testing pregnant women considered at risk and developing a better diagnostic test.

The cure for syphilis — usually two injections of Bicillin L-A, a type of penicillin — is relatively simple. But supplies have dwindled. Recently in Oklahoma, there were only seven doses statewide. Pfizer announced that stockpiles would be replenished by the end of 2017.

Dr. Vivian L. Wilson is medical director for eight community health clinics. In 37 years of practice, she has seen perhaps two cases of syphilis. But as a black Alabamian, she knows well the Tuskegee legacy. Though she appreciated a recent refresher course the state provided for staff members, the standard education materials, she noted, are severely outmoded.

“All the photographs still show patients who are Afro-American men,” Dr. Wilson said. “What message does that send?”

Watching the Detectives

After several months, dispirited Oklahoma investigators acknowledged that old-school tactics for locating contacts, like knocking on doors and cold-calling, were not very effective. Many people they sought are transient and use disposable phones.

“But they want to stay connected to their friends and their drugs,” said Ms. King, a supervising investigator. “So they’re all on Facebook. That’s where we’re finding them.”

Through Facebook, investigators memorize faces and gang tattoos, and follow the flare-ups and flameouts of relationships. As gang members and dealers post partying
plans, the sleuths determine where to point their investigation. They send potential patients messages through Facebook.

Ms. Williams’s team realized they were tracking a spread that reached back to last summer, involved members and associates of 17 gangs, and had infected young people from stable backgrounds who had used prescription opioids, then heroin. Patients often had symptoms that were a signature of this outbreak: weeping genital warts, called condylomata lata; patchy hair loss; and mucosal oozes inside the mouth.


They have come to understand why more than half of this outbreak’s victims are women: “The men give up the women’s names,” Ms. King said. “But the women are too loyal or afraid to give up the men.”

But recently investigators persuaded a gang leader to text members, ordering them to contact Ms. Williams.

Every day, the team checks arrest reports for people they are seeking. Chloe Hickman interviews inmates. Wearing glasses and no makeup, inclined toward modest cardigans, she doesn’t come across as someone who chats up gang members about their sex lives.

“I don’t cuss in my real life,” she said. “But in the jail, I flirt. I wear tight pants, a low-cut top and I use the F-word.

“Most of them don’t know what syphilis is. When I say it’s curable, they relax. And they’ll give me names.”

Usually such efforts lead to sagas of unrelenting grimness: mothers who prostitute daughters, and men who forcibly inject runaways with drugs to hook them, a practice known as guerrilla pimping.

Acquaintances of the investigators often dismiss their work as disgusting. For support, the women call each other daily, to laugh and vent.
Ms. Williams, on the job for eight years, said it gets to her, but she cannot let it go. “I remind myself that I’m not trying to fix all their problems,” she said. “Just one.”

**Maybe Next Time**

By 10 o’clock the next morning, Ms. Williams had arranged to pick up one person for treatment, been stood up by another and was texting with a man who refused her offer of a blood draw, claiming that needles made him anxious. She had driven a woman to the clinic, after waiting outside her house as, apparently, the woman was getting high on meth.

Now at the clinic, the woman seemed to have fled. Ms. Williams and nurses ran through hallways, looking for her.

One victory: The woman from the trailer was in the waiting room. But she was alone. In the parking lot, her boyfriend sat out the appointment in his pickup truck, motor idling. He would not come inside for treatment.

He would almost certainly reinfect his girlfriend. And Ms. Williams would have to persuade her to be tested and treated, yet again.

Follow @NYTHealth on Twitter. | Sign up for the Science Times newsletter.