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March 21, 2024

Urgent Letter to the City of Los Angeles
Approved unanimously by The Sunland Tujunga Neighborhood
Council on 3/20/2025

To the City of Los Angeles Councilmembers and City Attorney:

“Whereas, the County of Los Angeles following the recent rains, is dumping soil from the Eaton Fire burn area and, has already dumped over one thousand truckloads of soil that has collected in the catch basins without testing it first.”

and

“Whereas, lab results of soil samples collected at the Zachau Canyon Catch Basin Placement Site on March 10, 2025, and paid for by community members out of concern for the health and welfare of their families show toxic levels of the following: Arsenic 4.65 mg/kg (safe limit for ecological impact is 0.11) and Selenium 18.1 mg/kg (safe limit for ecological impact is 1.5-4.1), according to the test results and safe limit ranges submitted by 1 Laboratories 2520 San Fernando Road, Unit A Los Angeles CA 90065.”

“Whereas, the Zachau Canyon Sediment Placement site was created over 50 years ago before the homes were built and is surrounded by a residential community with homes separated only by a chain link fence. Since the site has not had any regular activity over the last 15 years and is just open space. Due to the animals at the bottom of the food chain being contaminated, they could now contaminate higher levels of the food chain including birds, such as owls and hawks. Many wild animals and birds live on this site and it is uphill from the Tujunga Wash, the home of several endangered species.”

and

"Whereas, the County of Los Angeles is made up of 88 cities and the City of Los Angeles is only one of those. Why should the taxpayers of the City of Los Angeles bear the costs of damages to our streets caused by the County? Many of which are substandard. Since the County of Los Angeles failed to notify the city of its intent and failed to get a Haul Route Permit so that the city could have helped to create the best route, in regards to these residential streets."

and

"Whereas, the County Health Department website warns residents of the potential for humans and animals to get Valley Fever from spores found in the dirt of the San Fernando Valley and when dirt is disturbed by digging or excavation, the spores are released into the air and inhaled. The fungus infects the lungs and can cause respiratory symptoms and serious health issues including death. Cases in California and the Los Angeles area are on the rise."

and

The Sunland Tujunga Neighborhood Council therefore requests:

- The immediate filing of a restraining order to stop the trucks, which is needed to protect the health and welfare of the families, pets, and wildlife in the North Eastern part of the City of Los Angeles."
- Soil Sampling by the city at various depths and locations at the Zachau Canyon Placement Site. The recent rains and breaks in between, had the potential to contaminate many layers of the dumped soils.
- Request that the City Departments tasked with stormwater runoff, look into the possibility of drinking water contamination for humans and wildlife as the Tujunga Wash provides some of the drinking water for the City of Los Angeles.
- Requests that the City of Los Angeles work closely with the County Health Department to request testing of these soils for Valley Fever Spores (Coccidioidomycosis), and any other potentially harmful illnesses that can be spread by the wind.

- Request that the community's concerns be addressed in regards to the fact that potentially toxic soils are being dumped on the top of a hillside, with schools one mile down wind, in a High Wind Velocity Area according to the City's own Zimas Website. Tujunga is known for having high winds and has often experienced sustained winds of 40 to 50 miles per hour with gusts up to 70 miles per hour. This potentially toxic soil is being dumped in an open space/residential area with the toxins potentially blowing all over the San Fernando Valley.
- Requests the City of Los Angeles advocate for our community to the County of Los Angeles, and asks them to stop using this site.
- Request that the City of Los Angeles hold the County of Los Angeles responsible for the damages to our local streets caused by thousands of heavy truckloads of dirt.
- Remediation of the soil at the site if the city's testing finds cause to take further measures.

The Sunland Tujunga Neighborhood thanks, the City of Los Angeles in advance for any actions to help address these issues.



Lydia Grant

President, Sunland -Tujunga Neighborhood Council

Synopsis of the Meeting on Truck Traffic and Debris Dumping in Seven Hills

The Sunland-Tujunga Neighborhood Council Meeting/Town Hall was focused on hearing from the community in regards to their concerns and fears in regards to extensive truck traffic related to debris dumping in a residential area at the LA County Zschau Sediment Placement Site in Tujunga. Community members raised issues over the volume of truck trips, lack of prior notice, potential contamination of dumped soil, potential health concerns and the impact on local roads and residents. There were over 80 people in attendance.

The County failed to follow their own policies as far as outreach and all notifications to the community

Key Facts from the Meeting with The County Public Works Representatives:

- **Due to the lack of trust in the County:** The residents hired a company to do soil testing of the Zachau Canyon Site which showed potentially toxic levels of Arsenic and Selenium, which concerned the lab who collected and tested the samples. The community members were notified of the results on March 18, 2025
- **Truck Traffic Impact:** Approximately 35 trucks have been making three to four trips daily, six days a week. This has resulted in an estimated 280 truck passes per day. The County has been dumping this soil for weeks and when it is completed there will have been thousands of truck trips through this residential community.
- **Lack of Community Notification:** The community was not informed in advance, and concerns were raised about inadequate communication from LA County Public Works.
- **Truck Haul Routes:** The County did not get any input from the City of Los Angeles or The Los Angeles Unified School District in regards to the Haul Route, which took the trucks past two of our local schools during pick up and drop off. After being contacted by the Neighborhood Council. The County did contact LAUSD and changed the Haul route away from the schools
- **Source of Debris:** The soil originates from debris basins, not private property or burned structures. Lydia confirmed the dirt was from a debris basin after following trucks to Altadena.
- **Soil Testing and Concerns:** After many complaints to the County Independent testing was conducted by the county. showing minimal to no contamination from metals, VOCs, hydrocarbons, or asbestos. However, concerns about possible Valley Fever spores and a reported burnt rubber smell prompted community requests for additional testing. After the Neighborhood Council Meeting, the county has decided to redo their test and is allowing representatives from the Neighborhood Council to be there.
- **LA County's Response:** Larry Bunker (LA County Public Works) explained that debris removal was urgent due to unexpected rain after the Eaton fires, leading to a scramble for dumping locations. He acknowledged that community notification should have been handled better. He also stated that he made all of the decisions and approved this to move forward
- **Road Damage Responsibility:** While concerns were raised about road damage from truck traffic, LA County stated that road repairs would fall under the city's responsibility and they would not pay for any repairs.
- **Community Requests:**

- Additional soil testing, particularly of the top layer at the dump site and the bottom layer which would have been the most contaminated at the top of the debris basin.
- Consideration of alternative dump sites, despite regulatory challenges.
- Possible rerouting of trucks to minimize residential impact.
- Coordination with LA County Health for further contamination assessments.

While LA County committed to improving transparency and considering follow-up testing, the truck traffic is expected to continue as long as rain accumulates debris in basins. The effort is projected to last at least another two to three weeks, depending on weather conditions. Community members expressed frustration over the handling of the situation and some suggested legal action to ensure their concerns are addressed.