



## **Griffith Park Advisory Board**

*Community Stewards of LA's Largest Park & Great Urban Wilderness*

Department of Recreation and Parks, City of Los Angeles

[www.laparks.org/griffithpark/advisory](http://www.laparks.org/griffithpark/advisory)

March 3rd, 2025

Los Angeles City Council,

As a result of the wildfire tragedy that swept across our city in January, our board called an emergency meeting early last month. At that time we convened an ad hoc committee to examine issues regarding fire safety in relation to Griffith Park.

At our most recent meeting, that took place late last week, our board unanimously approved the following report that was generated by the aforementioned ad hoc committee. We recommend that the points outlined therein be considered when analyzing issues related to Council Motion 25-0006-S30.

Thank you for your time.

Alex Crow

Chair, Griffith Park Advisory Board

cc: RAP: Jimmy Kim; Matthew Rudnick; Brenda Aguirre; Stefanie Smith; Tracy James; CD4: Mehmet Berker, Jennifer Hull

## **GPAB Fire Safety Ad Hoc Committee Report February 24, 2025**

In response to the January 2025 wildfires and the continued fire risk in Griffith Park, we recognize the urgent need to strengthen fire prevention, emergency preparedness, and response efforts. It is essential that these measures prioritize safety while also considering the needs of the diverse Griffith Park stakeholders and ensuring proper funding for any new initiatives.

To protect public safety, park resources, and surrounding communities, we recommend the following measures:

### **1. Fire Prevention as a Priority**

- No smoking in the park.
  - i. Re-evaluation of legal smoking areas within Griffith Park.
    - 1. Certain venues (e.g., Greek Theatre, golf courses, film shoots) currently allow smoking in designated areas. These policies should be re-considered with input from Park Rangers and LAFD.
  - ii. Expanded public-awareness campaigns to educate visitors on the no-smoking policy and its role in fire prevention.
    - 1. Given the potential for smoking incidents to lead to brush fires in the park, this step could significantly decrease fire risk. Options include Park Ambassadors, social media campaigns, messaging from specific venues (e.g., Observatory).
    - 2. Park visitors should be educated (via further public awareness) to contact Park Rangers anytime smoking is observed or in the event of any fire.
  - iii. Installation of additional signage reinforcing the no-smoking rule.
    - 1. It is important that signage reflect the current \$1,000 fine.
    - 2. Electronic message boards at primary entry points and large gathering spots can be used for this purpose.
  - iv. Strict enforcement of regulations prohibiting smoking.
    - 1. Park Rangers must be empowered to write citations for every smoking offense in the park. If public awareness/signage is enhanced, there will be no reason for offenders to claim ignorance.
    - 2. The City Attorney should be asked to re-evaluate policies regarding smoking offenses (i.e., whether to pursue fines, etc.)
- No camping in the park
  - i. Strict enforcement of regulations prohibiting camping.
    - 1. Identify and provide any necessary tools for Park Rangers to enforce this ban.
    - 2. Park entrances must be closed at their designated times. This responsibility falls to LAPD Security Services and has been inconsistently managed.
      - a. Some gates (e.g., Canyon Drive) are mandated to close at sunset yet are frequently open many hours later.

- b. Despite a park-wide closure time of 10:30 pm, visitors are often observed in certain locations (e.g., Old Zoo) into the early-morning hours.
  - c. Determine and equip LAPD with the necessary resources to enforce park/gate closure times.
  - d. Evaluate and implement additional outreach efforts for unhoused individuals camping in the park in coordination with CD4.
- Regular and thorough brush clearance to reduce fire hazards.
  - i. RAP currently conducts thorough brush clearance in full compliance with LAFD guidelines. Solicit LAFD's recommendations for any policy updates based on lessons learned from recent wildfires.
  - ii. Exploration of controlled burns as a clearance method. While such a practice would be controversial and would require serious risk assessment, it is worth hearing from experts (including RAP's Urban Ecologist) as to whether it should be evaluated.
  - iii. Engage RAP Urban Ecologist to develop strategies for invasive plant removal and fire-resistant native plantings, as appropriate.
  - iv. Establish clear communication channels with surrounding neighborhoods about brush clearance protocols.
- Evaluate LADWP infrastructure
  - i. Given the role that power lines and other electrical equipment have played in wildfires elsewhere, seek LADWP assessment of, and upgrades to, high-risk electrical infrastructure in and around Griffith Park.
  - ii. While the water infrastructure in the park is impressive (and enhancements are already in the works), LADWP and LAFD should ensure that the wilderness areas in the western part of the park are sufficiently served.

## **2. Emergency Preparedness and Response**

- Educate the public about Red Flag Warnings/Red Flag Alerts
  - i. A Red Flag Warning (National Weather Service) means critical fire-weather conditions are either occurring now or will occur shortly.
  - ii. A Red Flag Alert (LAFD) means weather conditions are such that the potential for a fast-moving brush fire is extremely high.
  - iii. Even though they occur with some regularity, Red Flag Warnings/Alerts still represent the potential for real danger and should not be taken lightly.
  - iv. Public awareness campaigns (see below) are essential on Red Flag days.
- Review and strengthen evacuation plans, with a focus on large/high-risk venues.
  - i. Large gathering points such as the Observatory, Greek Theatre, Zoo, Autry, etc., should take a fresh look at their plans.
  - ii. Lake Hollywood Park and other major gathering points in the Western portion of the park should be considered.
  - iii. High-risk venues such as the Zoo Magnet, Equestrian Center and any other areas of the park visited by large numbers of children and families (including Boys Camp and Girls Camp) should also receive high priority.

1. RAP/Los Angeles Equestrian Center and Animal Services initiate and activate a shared understanding of stakeholder responsibilities and allocate the human resources to meet the moment efficiently.
  2. Develop a community outreach information portal in partnership with RAP, Los Angeles Equestrian Center, and Animal Services to coordinate large-animal evacuation, on-site donations, and volunteer efforts.
- Implement an early-warning response system on Red Flag days, including increased staffing and public outreach. Dedicated funding is critical.
    - i. It is essential to enact policies that ensure visitors and residents feel confident that fire risks are being responsibly managed.
    - ii. Park Ambassadors/part-time staff can serve as “eyes and ears” for such issues as smoking, and should be deployed on all Red Flag days.
    - iii. Additional public outreach measures — to be determined by RAP in coordination with Park Rangers, LAFD, etc. — should be enacted.
  - Consider additional enforcement actions or fines on Red Flag days to deter fire risks.
    - i. Evaluate the feasibility of increasing smoking fines on Red Flag days to enhance deterrence and provide law enforcement with additional tools.
    - ii. Identify and implement further enforcement tools recommended by LAFD, Park Rangers, or LAPD.

### **3. Park-Closure Protocols**

- Park closures should be a last resort but may be necessary during episodes of the greatest fire risk, such as in January 2025.
- Specific criteria for closures should be established in advance, while decision-makers retain emergency authority to close the park at any time.
  - i. RAP should work with LAFD to determine specific criteria and triggers for closure, with input from Park Rangers and LAPD.
  - ii. Criteria should be communicated to the public so that park closures are never a surprise.
  - iii. Negative impacts on stakeholders
    1. In weighing standards for park closure, it is important to recognize both the value of park access to visitors, as well as the financial implications for City departments, employees and concessionaires.
  - iv. Positive impacts on first responders
    1. As a counter-balance, it is recognized that park closure reduces impediments to emergency access, visitor-associated fire risks and reduces the number of individuals who may need to be evacuated.
  - v. We look forward to reviewing proposed standards for closure as part of this process.
- Any closure must be supported by increased staffing and public outreach to ensure effectiveness.
  - i. Public information must be coordinated by RAP, CD4 and other City of LA agencies, and shared with key stakeholder groups (e.g., park venues, Friends of Griffith Park, local HOAs, resident associations and neighborhood councils).

- ii. Increased staffing any time the park is closed is an absolute necessity. Closing the park without sufficient staffing invites scofflaw entry and illicit behavior at precisely the time it is most dangerous.
- Provide economic support for concessionaires and staff.
  - i. Relief pay and benefits should be provided for park employees and staff impacted by closures due to fire risk.
  - ii. Financial assistance or temporary relief measures should be considered for concessionaires facing financial loss from closures.
  - iii. A dedicated fund should be established to mitigate economic hardships resulting from necessary fire-prevention measures.

**4. Funding Commitment**

- Sustainable funding must be allocated for fire prevention, emergency preparedness, and response efforts.
- Given the ongoing risk of large-scale fire events and the resulting public-safety threat, such funding should not be viewed as a luxury, but rather as a necessity.

The above recommendations are informed by discussion with experts including LAFD, Park Rangers, LADWP and RAP staff. We believe these recommendations are sensible, balanced and entirely doable. We look forward to responses from key agencies — RAP, LAFD, LAPD, etc. — and will continue to participate in the policy-making process. Thank you for this opportunity to express our views on fire safety as community stewards of Griffith Park.

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