

Why be concerned about where the newest Claremont College is

(Mountain view or no mountain view)

The city is presently considering the North Campus Master Plan (NCMP) which proposes to build the Keck Graduate Institute of Applied Life Sciences (KGI) and new graduate housing north of Foothill. The proposed location for KGI is between College and Dartmouth. This is the western part of the land used as the Robert J. Bernard Biological Field Station.

Map

What are the project effects?

The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) lists these unavoidable impacts of the proposed project:

- Adverse effects on scenic quality of visual open space on-site and view of mountains
- Loss of coastal sage scrub for plants and animals
- Loss of public viewsheds from Foothill and mountain view from College
- Loss of natural-occurring visual open space and removal of natural vegetation
- Cumulative loss of natural habitat within Claremont and surrounding jurisdictions

Why is this land important?

- It is a unique resource for education at all levels.
- It provides aesthetic relief from the strip malls, housing tracts, roads and industrial parks which have obliterated most of the open land in and around Claremont.
- It contains sensitive habitat and species
- It forms part of our city's character and is a reminder of Claremont's cultural and environmental history.

Make your voice heard!

The Architectural Commission approved the EIR in July. This paves the way for approval of the project. The Friends have filed an appeal stating that the EIR should not have been certified.

The City Council will hear the appeal on

**Thursday, September 9
at 6:30 pm at City Hall**

This is a public meeting. Everyone is encouraged to attend and learn how our elected representatives view environmental issues. Speak out and let them know what your values are.

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What is the Field Station?

It is roughly 87 acres of undeveloped land north of Foothill Bl between College and Mills. This land is owned by the Claremont Colleges and used as an outdoor laboratory.

Who uses it?

Biologists and their students from the Claremont Colleges as well as from colleges and universities outside of Claremont spend thousands of hours there each year studying a wide variety of plants and animals in their natural setting.

Students from preschool through high school go there for field trips. Poor, urban children are taken there for their first experience.

The average number of user-days per year now exceeds 4000.

What's there?

- 36 acres of relatively undisturbed coastal sage scrub, a plant and animal community which is fast disappearing in Southern California and is considered sensitive.
- A small, man-made lake and vernal pools.
- Oak forest in the north and willows around the lake.
- An area where a former citrus grove is recovering to coastal sage scrub.
- Grasslands
- The old Pomona College infirmary
- An outdoor pavilion for classes

The variety of habitats, including some disturbance, makes the Field Station especially useful educationally.

How will building affect the BFS?

The Field Station is relatively small and this means that the populations of plants and animals that it nurtures are also small. The smaller a population is, the more likely it is that chance events will kill off enough members so that the population will become extinct.

The NCMP will reduce the size of the BFS by about 13% which is a significant loss of food and nesting sites. Worse, the 11.4 acres is about 30% of the coastal sage scrub. This will have a serious impact on the ecological viability of the BFS.

Worst of all, the NCMP provides no protection for the rest of the land. In fact, the colleges have been quite clear that they intend to build on all of it eventually.

Some history

1925: President Blaisdell of Pomona College has a vision for a group of small colleges that share some facilities. He convinces Ellen Browning Scripps to buy and donate 250 acres of land for future educational use.

1926-1976: More land bought and colleges built. Botanic Garden, School of Theology, and golf course established on Scripps Trust land.

1976: Sale of remaining Scripps Trust land considered. To save it, Donald McKenna arranges donation of money to Claremont University Center (CUC) to buy it. Land designated as a field station, fenced, and lake dug. Use by colleges and Claremont schoolchildren steadily increases.

1995: Seventh Claremont College, Keck Graduate Institute (KGI), considered. Along with this, planning for future use of all college-owned lands begins. During the entire process, college faculty and students, as well as other Claremont citizens, express strong and consistent opposition to building on the Bernard Field Station.

1996: College presidents and boards of trustees approve the KGI and also approve building it on the BFS.

1998: Colleges bring North Campus Master Plan to City. Because of anticipated significant environmental damage, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required.

March/April, 1999: The draft EIR is prepared and presented for public comment. Several hundred people write letters or speak at the Architectural Commission (AC) meetings. Friends of the Bernard Biological Field Station is formed.

July, 1999: A response to public comments is prepared, some changes are made to the DEIR. AC holds four meetings to review the EIR and they conclude it adequately analyzes the issues and provides adequate mitigation measures.

August, 1999: The public disagrees with the AC's decision and the Friends file an appeal to the City Council.

Sept, 1999: The appeal will be heard at 6:30 pm on September 9th at City Hall.

Future: The City Council is expected to uphold the AC's decision. However, the appeal must be made in order for legal action to be taken. A referendum is also being considered.

What about property rights?

It is true that this is private property. However, the State has given cities the police power to regulate land use to protect public health, safety and the welfare of the community. This allows them to restrict development in order to protect the quality of the environment.

Shouldn't the City respect donor wishes and college plans?

Of course it should, where possible, out of courtesy. *However, just as the City cannot dictate college curriculum, the colleges cannot dictate land use.* The wishes and plans of an applicant must not influence environmental decisions.

What about alternative locations?

For the KGI: The golf course and the quarry were listed as alternatives. Both of these are owned by CUC. The golf course, like the BFS, is part of the parcel of land given by Miss Scripps for educational use. The golf course was removed from consideration when the City talked CUC into agreeing to keep it as it is for 25 years. The quarry was removed from consideration because CUC convinced the City that it would cost too much and take too long to develop.

For the BFS: The Botanic Garden and Pitzer arboretum are cultivated landscapes and they are not available for experimentation. The wilderness park is too far away and not a safe place to send students or leave equipment. The colleges have offered to buy land somewhere and call it a field station but even if it were a natural area, it would be used very little because of travel time and transportation costs.

What about the other 75 acres?

This land is not protected against future development, and CUC has stated quite clearly that the colleges plan to build on all of the land eventually. Development of the rest means destruction of the coastal sage scrub, the vernal pools, the willows, oaks and all the rest. It means the loss of mountain views and natural vegetation

- *The recent EIR approval was a crucial step towards allowing KGI to build on 11.4 acres of the Field Station without agreeing to preserve any of the 75 or so acres that remain.*

What is KGI?

KGI is a new member of the Claremont Colleges. Devoted to research in biotechnology, KGI will offer a Masters program in biological engineering as well as research, consulting and contracting services to drug, agricultural, and other biology-based industries. Its promoters believe it will cause an "explosion of growth" and bring as many as 12 new biotech companies to Claremont.

- *If KGI succeeds, the ties it develops with industry and government, and the demand it generates for its services and its students will make expansion natural. This would have to take place on more of the BFS.*

How do things stand now?

If the Friend's appeal is not granted, the City will go on to decide whether to approve the project. Unless the golf course or the quarry is reconsidered, project approval means it will go on the BFS. The Architectural Commission must consider whether the benefits of having the KGI at this location warrant its damaging effects on the environment

The EIR requires CUC to buy and preserve three acres of coastal sage scrub for each of the 11.4 acres lost to the KGI, but *CUC is not required to replace the lost habitat with open land in Claremont.* The colleges are likely to choose to buy land outside of Claremont rather than preserving part of the remaining Field Station land. This will clearly not do anything to lessen the environmental loss to Claremont. CUC plans to build on all of this land eventually, and none will be left unless a preservation agreement is drawn up.

CUC is willing to preserve all of the golf course, but not even part of this beautiful, educationally-unique resource. It is a terrible thing to waste.

What does the appeal claim?

"The EIR is inadequate in scope and insufficient in regard to the review carried out by the preparer. The mitigation analysis is faulty and fails to meet established standards. Relevant statutes in CEQA and in the Public Resources Code have not been obeyed. In addition, the Architectural Commission not only made findings based on insufficient evidence but made it clear that they did not have a good understanding of even the insufficient evidence in the record."

The grounds for this are detailed in letters attached to the appeal. You can read them at City Hall.

What do Claremont citizens say?

"This is our heritage, and a heritage we should be able to leave for future generations. This last remaining mountain view uplifts us all when the world seems too much with us"

Nancy Orange Birch

"Today the land has great value for what it is naturally. There is nothing else like it in this city...or any other that I know of."

Connie Layne

"All the good intentions as proposed by the Keck can never replace the ecological losses of so many living things"

A.E.Anderson

"The open vista created by the Biological Field Station is one of the best things about Claremont, distinguishing it from all the other overgrown suburbs in the area. Do we want a town where only the people living on the upper edges get to have a vista?"

Kathryn Miller

"It is obvious that a graduate institute can achieve its goals in any number of alternative sites..." "I have not, I repeat that I have not heard a public hue and cry demanding that the KGI must be placed on the BFS site. What I have heard, however, and heard clearly, is that the public is crying out to save this last magnificent vista left within the city."

John Cullen

"The BFS allows scientific literacy and an understanding of ecology and ecosystems in a way no building full of laboratories can ever do."

"KGI may indeed turn out to be a wonderful addition to the Claremont colleges, but as there is no logical reason to destroy what is already a wonderful addition to the Claremont colleges (namely, the field station) in order to build it, it ought to be built elsewhere."

March Rosenbluth

"It is a working field station that is an invaluable asset to Claremont's natural resources, to the student population of the Claremont Colleges and the local public schools and to the citizens of Claremont."

Debra Zygielbaum

"I am not opposed to a new graduate school for the colleges and I don't believe most people in Claremont are either. I am opposed to the kind of quick-fix, get-it-done-cheap thinking that would needlessly destroy such an important biological, cultural, and aesthetic resource for the sake of expediency."

Carol Bowdoin Gil

"What kind of community can rein in such power when it becomes unwieldy? I submit, a united community... that is tired of seeing every open space within walking distance paved over in the name of ill-conceived 'progress'."

Jason Venetoulis

"I value the field station because of what it offers our community; a respite from sprawl, a place to connect with rare and endangered ecosystems, a valued educational resource and an area where nature prevails. As humans, we need natural landscapes..."

Paul Faulstich

Names and numbers

FBBFS

website: www.fbbfs.org

Phone: (909) 260-4403

Address: P.O.Box 1101, Claremont, 91711

Contacts: Jim Bogen, 607-2802

Susan Schenk, 607-4018

Steve Nagler, 626-1185

KGI website: www.kgi.edu

City Hall: To write to the City Council and Architectural Commission--

P.O.Box 880

Claremont, CA 91711

Copies of the EIR, including letters from citizens, are available for you to read at City Hall, 225 W. 2nd St, and at the public library.

Donations

These are always very welcome! They may be designated for general use (such as this newsletter) or for legal expenses. Please make checks out to Friends of the Bernard Biological Field Station.