



Biological Sciences
College of Science

8 March 2016

Mr. Terry E. Tornek
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P.O. Box 7115
Pasadena, CA 91109-7215

via email: ttornek@cityofpasadena.net

RE: Importance of Nursery Facilities in Hahamongna Watershed Park

Dear Mayor Tornek:

It is with great enthusiasm that I submit this letter of support for the continued existence of the Arroyo Seco Foundation's Hahamongna Cooperative Nursery (HCN) in Hahamongna Watershed Park.

The nursery is important to me as a professor of Restoration Ecology at Cal Poly, Pomona. There are so few native plant nurseries in Los Angeles County that I can rely on to supply my research program with carefully collected and propagated native plants. In addition, the educational opportunities the nursery provides for my students are significant. I take Cal Poly students for tours of the nursery during my Restoration Ecology class, and they comment that this is one of their favorite field trips in the course. There is an exceptional demand among our students for experience working with native plants and performing ecological restoration. The Cal Poly Environmental Biology degree program requires a 10-week internship for graduation, and I hope to place student interns at the Hahamongna Cooperative Nursery in the future. I sincerely hope that the nursery will be able to continue its operation in Hahamongna Watershed Park.

The HCN is actively producing locally-collected and locally-grown native plants for local restoration projects that are coming down the pipeline. Last year, the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) announced its support for approximately 700 acres of restoration along 11 miles of the Los Angeles River, and is currently completing a similar restoration study for the Arroyo Seco Streamway. The anticipated restoration projects associated with these plans will require millions of native plants in the coming years, a supply that does not currently exist in the Los Angeles area. As a Restoration Ecologist, I also understand the great importance of using locally adapted plants in restoration. The HCN is focused on propagating plants that are adapted to the region where they will be planted, something that is difficult for most nurseries to do. We cannot afford to lose this local native plant nursery at this time.

The HCN is one of a small number of native plant nurseries located within the Los Angeles area, and is the only nursery solely devoted to native plant production for restoration projects associated with the Arroyo Seco. Thus far, the HCN has produced more than 80 different species of native plants, totaling over 5,000 plants. The nursery bridges the gap between the plans for, and actual implementation of, local restoration projects—and does so while simultaneously benefiting the local community.

Producing this native plant material within the Los Angeles metropolitan area provides benefits to both the local environment and community.

- *Environmental Impact.* Native plants are better suited for drought conditions and climate change. Growing these natives locally, such as in the HCN, decreases emissions associated with shipping plants in from other cities and states, increases local habitat (especially for pollinators), and produces plants that are likely to be better adapted to the project areas they will be installed, thus increasing survivorship.

- *Community and Educational Impact:* The growth of native plants provides hands-on educational and social opportunities to the community. The HCN impacts hundreds of volunteers who participate in the nursery's workdays and educational programs. The nursery offers opportunities for the public to learn about the importance of water, ecological restoration, and stewardship while actively engaging in the transformation of their local community and waterway. In addition, the nursery provides volunteer and internship opportunities for students pursuing careers in horticulture, natural resource management, and restoration. I take my graduate and undergraduate students in Restoration Ecology for a tour of the nursery and the Arroyo Seco, and the experience of observing the many layers of a large-scale restoration plan is invaluable to them. It would be a significant lost educational opportunity for them if the nursery no longer exists.

I strongly support the continued existence of the Hahamongna Cooperative Nursery, and urge the Public Works Department to allow the Arroyo Seco Foundation to continue the operation of this nursery in Hahamongna Watershed Park.

Respectfully,



Erin Questad, PhD
Assistant Professor
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