



July 26, 2017

Todd Mitchell  
Human Resources/Risk Manager  
City of Goleta  
130 Cremona Drive  
Goleta, CA 93117

RE: Ellwood Mesa Trails Follow Up

Dear Mr. Mitchell:

At your request and on behalf of the California JPIA, we visited the Ellwood Mesa Sperling Preserve and Butterfly Habitat on Tuesday, July 11<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of our visit was to review the condition of the preserve's extensive network of trails in response to the findings of a recent independent tree health study. We were joined by several members of the City's Maintenance and Parks and Recreation Departments, as well as a certified arborist. Please thank them for their help in this evaluation.

The independent tree health study referenced above found the presence of several hundred dead trees within the preserve; including trees in the immediate area of hiking and walking trails routinely used by the public ([Photograph 1](#)). Dead and dying trees pose a serious safety risk in this preserve due to their congregation in populated areas, presence of pests, potential for sudden trunk and branch falling, and risk of bringing additional trees down with them ([Photograph 2](#)).

After reviewing the study as well as the actual preserve, the city is strongly recommended to take immediate action to actively discourage the use of the area; up to and including closing certain trails with high concentrations of dead and dying trees ([Photograph 3](#)).

The following are specific recommendations for the city's consideration and action:

1. Prepare an action plan to top off and remove dead and dying trees (trees marked 0 and 1); beginning with the trees located along known trails.
2. Periodically inspect the trails to identify and remove make-shift swings and encampments ([Photograph 4](#)). Ensure existing structures such as bridges, benches, and viewing areas, do not pose obvious and unnecessary risk to the public.

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3. Install signage warning users of the hazards and potential for injury. Close certain areas that pose additional risk depending on the number and locations of dead trees. Signage should be installed and maintained at all trail entrances and in both directions. See [\(Photographs 5 & 6\)](#) for sample signage.
4. Post the known hazard and trail closing on the city's website for additional notification purposes. Click here <https://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/angeles/alerts-notice> - for the trail condition and notification site for the Angeles National Forest, who routinely close trails for similar reasons. Developing a similar site for the city will be a good way to provide due warning to the public as well as maintain a record of notifications.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the city's ongoing risk management efforts. If you have any questions regarding this evaluation including its recommendations, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Timothy Karcz, CSP, ARM-P, CEAS  
Risk Management Consultant

CC: Norm Lefmann, Assistant Executive Officer, California Joint Powers Insurance Authority

Attachments (photos)



**Photograph # 1 – Cluster of Dead Trees**



**Photograph # 2 – Fallen Tree Along Trail**



**Photograph # 3 – Trail Laden with Dead Trees**



**Photograph # 4 – Make-Shift Swing**



**Photograph # 5** – Trail Closure Signage



**Photograph # 6** – Trail Closure Signage