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County Announces Enforcement of Public Hours, Closure of One Area Along Santa Ana River Trail

Santa Ana, CA (Oct. 30, 2017) — On Friday, November 3, 2017, the County of Orange will begin active enforcement of public hours along the recreational Santa Ana River Trail (SART) that runs adjacent to the Santa Ana River flood control channel. In addition, beginning November 10, the County will permanently close to public use the west side of the flood control channel between 17th Street and Adams Avenue in the City of Fountain Valley.

OC Parks and the Orange County Flood Control District have had permanently posted signage declaring the public access hours along the entirety of the trail, though the hours have been inconsistently enforced. The public access hours will remain the same as currently posted, November 1-February 28 from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and March 1-October 31 from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Starting November 3, 2017, individuals who access the SART outside of the posted hours will be in violation of state trespass laws and subject to citation.

"The enforcement of public hours will enable the County to ensure the safety and security of the recreational users of the trail, while simultaneously protecting the integrity of the flood control channel for its intended purpose," said Khalid Bazmi, Chief Engineer of the Orange County Flood Control District, in a memorandum to the Board of Supervisors.

To encourage compliance and reinforce the publicly posted hours, the County will install additional signage in prominent locations and will install pedestrian gates at entrances to the SART. Sign installation will begin on October 30, 2017. Gate installation will begin in late 2017 and is anticipated to be completed in mid-2018. Once installed, the areas between the gates will be patrolled by law enforcement during public access hours, and the gates will be locked daily at the posted trail closing time.

"While we recognize that the gates will constitute a change in recreational user's access to the SART, it is a critical step in maintaining one of the most widely used trails in the County as a safe and secure place for public use," said Dylan Wright, Director of OC Community Resources. OC Community Resources oversees OC Parks, the County department responsible for the maintenance of the public trail per a Memorandum of Understanding with the Orange County Flood Control District.



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The enforced public access hours for the SART will affect the stretch from 17th Street in Fountain Valley to Imperial Highway in the City of Anaheim. Because of the United States District Court's continuing jurisdiction, the SART public access hours and gate closures will not be enforced in the area subject to the District Court injunction at this time.

Orange County Undersheriff Don Barnes said, "Over the past seven weeks the Sheriff's Homeless Outreach team has identified that a significant criminal element exists on the riverbed posing a threat to public safety. We are working to mitigate this danger. The Sheriff's Department is willing to enforce any restrictions or closure the County chooses to impose."

In addition to the active enforcement of public access hours, the County will permanently close the west side of the flood control channel between 17th Street and Adams Avenue in the City of Fountain Valley to public use beginning on November 10, 2017. The east side of the trail between 17th Street and Adams Avenue, which runs parallel and is a paved portion of the SART, will remain open for recreational trail users during the publicly posted hours.

"Closing this portion of the west side of the trail is necessary for the flood control and water reclamation responsibilities of the Flood Control District," said Bazmi. "It will allow for the enhancement and protection of the landscaping, infrastructure and environment of the property owned by the Flood Control District. The presence of encampments has deferred critical maintenance to the flood control channel, which is becoming a matter of pressing concern given the approaching rainy season."

In the area of the trail closure from 17th Street to Adams Avenue, individuals illegally encamped will be asked to comply with the public access closure and relocate before November 10, 2017. The County has undertaken a concerted effort to engage in case management with individuals encamped in the area to offer resources and available shelter options. These efforts will continue. Individuals who remain in the project area on the west side of the SART between 17th Street and Adams Avenue after November 10, 2017, will be subject to citation.

The County of Orange Public Works Department, acting as the OC Flood Control District, maintains more than 380 miles of flood control channels throughout the County and is tasked with the responsibility of protecting Orange County from the threat of floods by designing and constructing channels, storm drains, dams, pump stations and other flood control related facilities. Flood control channels are not designed or intended for human habitation, and are not a safe place to live.

In partnership with the OC Flood Control District which maintains the property, these actions are being undertaken as part of a joint effort by the Orange County Sheriff's Department, OC Public Works and OC Community Resources.

For more information about the public access hours along the SART or the closure of the west side of the SART from 17th Street to Adams Avenue, please visit www.ocgov.com.

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