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2023 biodiversity agreements are worldwide: Claremont Hills Wilderness Park and the UN

By RHEA SETHI & CALLUM STEWART-GLAVIN REPORTERS

Deforestation. Coral bleaching. Air pollution. Humans are wreaking havoc on the environment, polluting the Earth, and ruining the planet's biodiversity. The well-being of the earth is on a downward spiral, and steps are taken to reduce humanity's impact.

From Dec. 7 to 19 in Montreal, Canada, the United Nations held the UN Biodiversity Conference. The conference, called COP 15, met to pass and adopt the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, a plan to maintain biodiversity as much as possible. The first draft of this plan was released on July 12, 2021 by the Secretariat for the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and aims to achieve a nature-positive world by 2030. The passing of this plan brings the world closer to attaining the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, a set of goals created in 2015 designed to create a more sustainable future for the planet. Under these seventeen goals, all people will experience peace and prosperity by 2030.

The main goal of the plan is to conserve and protect 30% of the land, coastal areas, and oceans of the world that are the most important aspects of biodiversity. Defined as the variety of life on Earth, biodiversity is essential for the conservation of the planet, supporting many stable and thriving ecosystems. Without these ecosystems, humans would not have access to the environmental systems and resources that are necessary for modern life. The International Union for Conservation of Nature states that despite agreements made in previous years to conserve it, biodiversity has declined over the past decade due to human influence on ecosystems, such as climate change.

"Healthy biodiversity and ecosystems are the foundation of life and fundamental to the enjoyment of human rights, including the rights to life, health, food, water, culture, and a healthy environment," UN experts said.

Biodiversity also supports the economy, with the UN Conference on Trade and Development estimating that 40% of the world's economy is directly derived from biodiversity. The agriculture, forestry, fishery, outdoor tourism, and pharmaceutical industries all depend on the variation of life on Earth.

In addition to saving biodiversity, the Post-2020

Global Biodiversity Framework also works to increase the rate of invasive species reduction by 50%, eliminate plastic waste that is dumped into the environment, and reduce nutrients and pesticides that are lost to the environment by over 50% and two-thirds, respectively.

Saving the environment is a critical issue in many minds. Without humans taking care to conserve the natural world, it will be lost. Though environmental conservation may seem like a faraway concept, it has affected Claremont this past month, in the form of a habitat restoration grant. This grant will allow the city to preserve the environment surrounding Claremont so

Boasting 500,000 annual visitors, the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park spans 3,000 acres of hillside at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains and the Angeles National Forest. The main trail, sometimes called the Claremont Loop, is a five mile long loop that has numerous side trails branching off from it. The trails are beloved by many — hikers use them to enjoy the outdoors, the CHS cross-country team for long runs, and more.

The City of Claremont received in early January a grant of \$734,764 to use to conserve the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park. According to the Claremont Courier, the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, which donated the money, gives funding to projects that "promote conservation in California by protecting open spaces and wildlife habitat, while also giving the public opportunities for low impact recreation." The San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy is one of eleven such state-controlled conservancies in California which donate such environmental grants to regions across the state.



art | Charlotte Griffiths

that residents and the students of CHS can continue to enjoy it.

From cross country to hiking clubs across campus, the students of Claremont High School clearly enjoy exploring the world around them. However, in such an urbanized society it can be difficult to truly enjoy. CHS students are luckier than most, as one especially useful place to do just that is in their very own city: the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park. Frequenters of this park are receiving happy news, as the Wilderness Park recently received a sizable habitat restoration grant.

"[The park] is nice for active students because it gives them diverse options for physical exercise," said junior Arya Patel, a member of CHS' Happy Hikers Club. "I think the grant is a good amount, as it will help the park improve their infrastructure and help with keeping it well-maintained too. It will definitely be beneficial for students who will be able to better use the park now."

The City of Claremont has stated that they will use the money for three main things. First, taking out brush and invasive plants that increase the risk of fire, which could then ruin the biodiversity of the wilderness park. Second, buying tools and other equipment that is needed to maintain the trail and take the brush out. Third, purchasing signs that can be placed at the park's entrance in order to ensure that visitors know how to preserve the wildlife of the Claremont Hills.

Claremont is incredibly fortunate to receive this grant, and students will benefit greatly from this, as they will be able to better enjoy the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park and preserve its longevity.

As the new year begins, the importance of environmental conservation must be recognized. Luckily, with the contribution of this grant, Claremont can do its due diligence in helping maintain our planet for future generations to come, just as the UN has done with their biodiversity pledge.