

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DIVISION OF MAINTENANCE
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June 4, 2012

Dear Concerned Topanga Canyon Boulevard Ad Hoc Committee Member:

Caltrans recently sprayed herbicide along state right of way to establish a fire strip and eradicate a number of very invasive weeds (Yellow Star Thistle, Scotch Broom, Euphorbia Terracina) along State Route 27 (SR-27) through Topanga Canyon. Due to community complaints, Caltrans has ceased spraying operations until an amicable and mutually supportive solution to fire and non-native vegetation control can be reached.

There is a practical long term need to control vegetation in order to diminish fire hazards and invasion of non-native plant species. Given budget and personnel resource limitations, it is impractical for Caltrans to continue hand-cutting of vegetation. This method takes approximately 24 hours to clear a quarter-mile of shoulder. Completion of vegetation control for the entire area would take several months.

We have reduced our maintenance workforce in Los Angeles and Ventura counties from 1,390 in 2002 to 850 in 2012, and that will be reduced to 700 in 2013. Thus, to protect the community from potential fire hazards we embarked upon a spraying process, which is unacceptable to the community. We will now develop a process that is mutually agreeable to the community and Caltrans while meeting fire control and non-native vegetation species invasion requirements.

We request your input in the formation of creative solutions to meet our mutual needs, which may include job sharing of critical responsibilities. We will meet with the Topanga Canyon Blvd. (TCB) Committee, comprised of local government representatives and community-based organizations, to discuss alternatives to meeting these requirements. Caltrans looks forward to working with the community to meet all of our needs. Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky's office will notify you in the near future of the TCB Committee meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniel J. Freeman".

DANIEL J. FREEMAN, P.E.
Deputy District Director
Maintenance, District 7