

# BEL AIR SKYCREST Property Owners' Association

September 16, 2019

PLUM Committee  
Councilmember/Chair Marqueece Harris-Dawson  
Councilmember Bob Blumenfield  
Councilmember Curren D. Price, Jr.  
Councilmember Gilbert A. Cedillo  
Councilmember John S. Lee  
200 Spring St, L.A. 90012  
[LACouncilComment.com](http://LACouncilComment.com)

**RE: Council File No. 13-1339, Case No. CPC-2016-4520-CA**

Support for addition of Mexican Elderberry and Toyon species to the City of Los Angeles Protected Tree and Shrub Ordinance and use of the *cumulative diameter metric of 4 inches at 4.5 feet above ground*

Dear PLUM Committee:

I am writing on behalf of Bel Air Skycrest Property Owners' Association (BASPOA) to express support for:

- 1) addition of the Mexican Elderberry and Toyon species to the City of Los Angeles Protected Tree and Shrub Ordinance
- 2) use of the *cumulative diameter measurement of 4 inches at 4.5 feet above ground* as the determining metric for protection

As a residential association of the Mulholland Scenic Parkway/Santa Monica Mountains, Bel Air Skycrest Property Owners' Association (BASPOA) takes the preservation of native resources very seriously. Species like the Mexican Elderberry and Toyon are crucial links in a delicately balanced network of complex, highly interdependent life forms—everything from the smallest wildflower to the mightiest mountain lion—that are the jewels in our city's urban wildlands crown. We must do all that we can to help them survive the challenges posed by climate change and increased urbanization. Our quality of life; the scenic, recreational, and educational character of our city; and ultimately our very survival depend on it.

The question of whether the Elderberry and Toyon are defined as trees or as shrubs seems to have given rise to a good deal of confusion and unfortunate wasting of time in the ordinance amendment process thus far. This “tree vs. shrub” problem is an artificially

imposed distinction: our area's particular environmental conditions produce a number of species (including some already on the protected list) that may produce either a single or multiple trunks. That very "ambiguity" is in fact an important key to their adaptation and survival in drought and fire conditions and in no way diminishes the ecological value of the specimen. That is why the existing cumulative metric is so appropriate. In all the back-and-forth discussion, we have seen no compelling reason to change this existing metric for protected trees and no compelling reason to hold these two species to a different standard from the rest. In fact, there are compelling reasons NOT to do so as it will only weaken the ordinance and allow significant specimens to be swept away in the course of routine brush clearance.

We therefore urge you to add the Mexican Elderberry and Toyon species to the City of Los Angeles Protected Tree and Shrub Ordinance and to protect the character and resiliency of these two species and of our wildlands in general.

- REJECT the standard proposed by the Urban Forestry Division
- REJECT the compromise standard proposed by the Community Forest Advisory Committee
- **SUPPORT continued use of the cumulative diameter metric of 4 inches at 4.5 feet above ground.**

If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Sincerely,



Lois Becker  
BASPOA Community Liaison  
LA 90049