

Dark skies

From page A1

During Malibu's early days as a far-flung outpost of Los Angeles, the area attracted those who wanted to escape the city rather than live amidst the bustle.

"I grew up here in the 50s and it was almost totally dark then," Diane Pope, who lives on Cuthbert Road, wrote in an email. "They didn't call it 'dark skies,' but that's when no street lights was decided... We all knew to use flood lights only when needed—we couldn't just leave them on [all night]. I wish you all could have seen the sky then. The Milky Way was amazing—like diamonds on black velvet."

One of the original architects for the Malibu West subdivision, Eugene Dvoretzky, now 86 years old, said in a phone interview, "That area was so far out, and so rural, that I don't think anyone even thought about street lights at the time."

The first houses on nearby Point Dume were built even earlier, beginning in 1948, and the area's 600 houses, condos and apartments still do not have street lights.

children attending MHS.

"When this last Coastal Commission allowed the stadium lights, you can say goodbye to dark skies," Hutchinson said. "They're also putting in parking for 150 cars by the field with parking lights. It'll just be one continuous sky glow. It's the whole idea of what's happening to Malibu."

Malibu Park resident Hans Laetz said he also cherishes dark skies, but feels the concern over the high school lights is "more of a social argument."

"We want people to congregate," Laetz said. "We have a social responsibility to provide for our students and our neighborhood to have community involvement."

Laetz argued that the field lights are not the true source of light pollution in the area, because they are only on for limited times on designated nights of the year. The real culprit of light pollution in the area, he said, is landscaping lights illegally installed by homeowners in the area to illuminate trees and shrubs, often left on at all times of night.

Marshall Thompson, who

"I think the situation people were reacting to was increased urbanization of the environment. The lights were yet another arrow of what the city was formed around, which was to protect the environment."

MARSHALL THOMPSON

Malibu Park Junior High was partitioned in 1963 on 35 acres of land originally part of Juan Cabrillo Elementary School. When the high school was added in 1992, the Malibu Park Committee expressed concerns about whether the school intended to install night game lighting to Mike Matthews, the first principal at MHS.

In a 1994 letter responding to the committee, Matthews wrote, "There are no plans to have night games at any time ... In the long term future of the sports activities here (at Malibu High) I do not see a need for night lights."

Those plans later changed, when high school officials began to use temporary field lights for night football games in 2002, despite not possessing a conditional use permit (CUP) to do so. When the school district received permission from the California Coastal Commission to install permanent lights in 2011, some residents said they felt betrayed.

Judi Hutchinson, a member of the 1994 Malibu Park Committee, has lived next to the school property for 45 years and has grand-

moved to Malibu Park in the 1990s, considers himself a part of the "dark skies" camp but understands the argument in favor of field lights.

"I'm real into having kids have opportunities for sports, I think that's a good community thing."

Thompson, who has four grown children, said there was a demographic shift occurring in Malibu Park with fewer older residents each year and more young families moving in. He feels that he and others who opposed lighting at the high school were portrayed as "anti-kid," and "old geezers," which he says was not the case. He noted that night lighting impacts the sensitive hunting behaviors of wildlife. Longtime residents, such as Hutchinson, were concerned that the high school field lights were just another example of increasing urbanization on the west side.

"I think the situation people were reacting to was increased urbanization of the environment," he said. "The lights were yet another arrow of what the city was formed around, which was to protect the environment."

Fukushima radiation

From page A1

Steven Manley, a biology professor at Cal State Long Beach.

A research team led by UCLA ecologist Peggy Fong will take 15-lb. samples at locations off Escondido Beach and a second site near County Line Beach sometime between Feb. 24 and March 5. More than 20 labs and universities will take place in a West Coast-wide effort called Kelp Watch 2014, testing 35 sites from Alaska to Baja.

Found up and down the coast, these canopy-forming kelps act like sponges and absorb most of what is in the water. The kelp serves essentially as a natural dosimeter, which means it measures an absorbed dose of radiation.

Earlier this month, government officials said trace elements of radiation from the Fukushima disaster did not endanger California beachgoers.

"There is no public health risk at California beaches due to radioactivity related to events at Fukushima," the California Department of Public Health said in a statement.

One of the main reasons for the study is to "let the public know what's there," Manley said.

Manley says that he's "pretty sure" researchers will find radiation in the kelp samples; however, he anticipates a very low amount because the radiation most likely has been diluted.

The kelp will be dried out, ground down and inspected for radiation by scientists from the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory at California Berkeley.

This series of tests is the first of three efforts planned this year by scientists to monitor radiation levels on the West Coast. Results from the research are expected to be available on a website by March.

On March 11, 2011, a magnitude 9.0 earthquake struck off the coast of Japan, resulting in casualties of around 20,000 and decimating properties. It also triggered a series of tsunamis that damaged the Fukushima Daiichi



Dave Lichten / TMT

Local kelp, like the organism pictured above in the Malibu Colony, is going to be tested later this year for possible radiation contamination related to the March 2011 Japanese tsunami and resulting Fukushima radiation leaks.

power plant and sent radiation leaks into the ocean. Studies show that radionuclides from the plant continue to leak into the sea, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, but experts say the radiation quickly dilutes in the water.

Professor Manley has been getting calls from various surfers and beach goers asking if it's safe to swim and surf.

Last week, visitors to Malibu beaches indicated they were also keen to find out what the research yields.

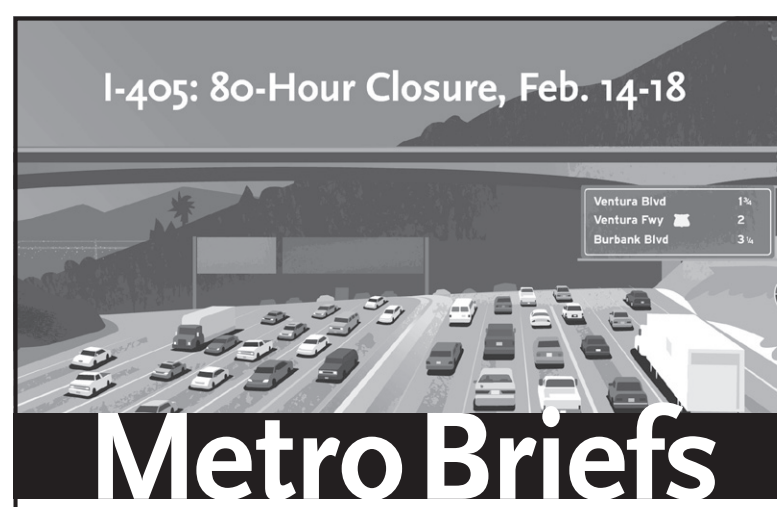
"I'm really interested to see what this research finds," one local said.

One surfer said he was aware of the radiation reports, but would not let it affect his time in the ocean.

"This is not a good development but we will still go strong as surfers," he said.



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Metro Briefs

WESTSIDE/CENTRAL

80-Hour Closure on Northbound I-405 February 14-18

Closures of the northbound I-405 freeway in the Sepulveda Pass are planned over Presidents' Day weekend, February 14-18. Partial lane closures will be in effect between Getty Center Dr and Ventura Bl during the day, and all northbound lanes will be closed at night. To avoid delays, drive less or avoid the area. For a complete closure schedule, visit metro.net/405.

Public Hearing on Bus Service February 12

The Metro Westside/Central Service Council will discuss proposed June changes to bus service on Wednesday, February 12 at 5pm. The meeting takes place at the La Cienega Tennis Center, 325 S La Cienega Bl, Beverly Hills. For details, visit metro.net.

LA Union Station Maintenance Underway

Metro has started several maintenance and improvement projects as part of its commitment to restore LA Union Station as a transportation hub. Work will be completed in time for the station's 75th anniversary in May. More information at metro.net/unionstation.

Upcoming Opportunities for Artists

Metro will host seven free workshops throughout Los Angeles County for artists interested in applying for art opportunities in the expanding Metro system. For more information, visit metro.net/art.

Go Metro for Valentine's Day

Impress your Valentine this year and Go Metro! Whether you're planning a date in Boyle Heights, Pasadena, Downtown LA or Miracle Mile, Metro riders receive discounts at a variety of restaurants and shows. For these specials and more, visit metro.net/discounts.

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