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Nature Lovers Aren't Happy About a Proposed Music Festival at Sepulveda Basin

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[EXPAND](#)

Environmental advocates fear the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve could be damaged by a neighboring music festival.

[U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles via Flickr](#)

Members of the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society are petitioning to prevent a "giant music festival" from taking place at the Sepulveda Basin Recreation Area in October, believing that the festival's large footprint could harm a nearby wildlife reserve. But a representative from the City of Los Angeles' Department of Recreation and Parks, which submitted the permit request for the festival, says the petitioners' concerns are "based on information that's not correct."

The [Sepulveda Basin Recreation Area](#), located just north of Encino, is a mixed-use open space that includes public parks, golf courses, cricket fields, two sports complexes, a Japanese garden and an archery range. The 225-acre [Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve](#) occupies the southeastern portion of the recreation area, in a flood-control basin above a portion of the Los Angeles River that was dammed by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1938.

The [Audubon Society petition](#), which currently has about 2,700 signatures, says the proposed three-day festival, called AngelFest, will attract about 65,000 visitors per day. October, the petition notes, is fall migration season for many species of birds that visit the reserve, raising concerns that the festival's "huge amplifiers, intense lighting and pyrotechnic displays" will disrupt those migratory patterns.

"The record of large music festivals is not one of low-impact, drug- and alcohol-free co-existence with neighbors, much less wildlife," the petition reads in part. "The AngelFest promoters are professional and well-intentioned, but it is hard to imagine even the best outcome not having a significant negative impact on the Reserve."

But Charles Singer, superintendent of recreation and parks operations for the city, says the petitioners are jumping to conclusions based on limited and inaccurate information about the scope of the festival and the people behind it. He says the festival only moved forward after an extensive vetting process and meetings with both the Army Corps of Engineers, which still manages the land, and local environmental advocates, including the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Steering Committee. The Corps of Engineers is currently in the midst of producing an environmental assessment report, which Singer says will ultimately dictate the exact location and scope of AngelFest within the larger confines of the entire recreation area.

"You have professional environmentalists who survey the land to make sure [the festival] will be safe for wildlife," Singer says.

Singer further notes that the event producers behind the festival, the [Make Good Group](#), have a great environmental track record and were thoroughly vetted by his department before the project moved forward. "It's been about 2½ years since they first came to us," he says.

What kind of music the festival will feature has not yet been revealed.

The Make Good Group's biggest claims to fame are producing Live 8, the 2005 benefit concerts held simultaneously in 10 locations around the world, and introducing New York City's mandatory recycling program, billed as the first of its kind in a "large, high-rise urban setting," according to a set of case studies about the company provided to *L.A. Weekly* by Singer.

According to a [public notice](#) posted on the Army Corps of Engineers' website, AngelFest will be "a three (3)-day music and cultural event celebrating the City of Los Angeles." What kind of music the festival will feature has not yet been revealed. A [site plan](#) on the public notice appears to show five stages, plus a "comedy tent" and a "kids' zone"; three of the five stages are immediately adjacent to the wildlife reserve, as is one of three food and beverage areas.

Although, as [L.A. Weekly has previously reported](#), most major festivals do have issues with reducing trash and being sensitive to the natural environment, Singer is confident that by working with local environmental advocates and the Corps of Engineers, his department and the Make Good Group can make AngelFest a low-impact event..

[Update: An earlier version of this article failed to note the existence of the site plan detailing the proposed location of the festival and its various stages. We regret the error