

CITY OF CHINO HILLS

PRESS RELEASE



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GRAZING SHEEP RETURN TO CHINO HILLS FOR 12th YEAR OF WEED ABATEMENT PROGRAM

A total of 2,800 ewes and lambs have been munching their way through the open space areas near Hidden Trails Elementary School this month. This week they stopped traffic for a few minutes as they crossed Grand Avenue to get to the north side of the street. Notice of the planned street crossing on the City website brought some people out to Grand Avenue Park to watch thousands of sheep crossing Grand Avenue.

Their popularity continues throughout their stay in Chino Hills, as families seek out the grazing sheep to watch them chomp their way through the vegetation.

This marks the 12th year that sheep have returned to Chino Hills. They are an important part of the City's award-winning open space weed abatement program. The sheep will continue to graze their way through the open space over the next several months and will be moved out of Chino Hills when the remaining weeds turn brown.

The City's "green" weed abatement efforts also include the periodic use of goats to munch on the low-growing chaparral such as the Laurel Sumac. Grazing cattle can be found on 270 acres of open space in the Village Oaks area and grazing horses enjoy 155 acres of open space in the Butterfield Ranch area. All of these animals play a role in the City's efforts to mitigate wildfire danger in the open space. Some humans get involved too. City crews and community service workers play a part as well. The overall effort clears weeds from over 200 of the City's 3,000 acres of open space.

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Page Two – Sheep Return to Chino Hills

The City of Chino Hills creates fuel modification zones each year, to clear the brush 30 to 100 feet away from residential property lines adjacent to the City's open space. These fuel modification zones help protect residents in the event of a brush or wild fire. The sheep grazing throughout the open space help reduce the fire fuel in the interior open space areas.

Shepherd and owner Vincente Narganes brings in the sheep to graze areas where the terrain is very steep and more difficult for City crews to work. The partnership is a win-win situation. The City of Chino Hills saves approximately \$17,250 in yearly weed abatement costs this year; and the shepherd is able to have his sheep graze in areas with abundant vegetation. The City of Chino Hills has saved over \$210,000 during the program's history.

The shepherd and border collies will tend the sheep 24 hours a day, and pen them at night. The shepherd will reside in a small trailer on the site. The State Department of Fish and Game was consulted about the initial plan to graze sheep in the open space, and they support this form of weed abatement.

For more information on the sheep grazing - weed abatement program contact Sean O'Connor, Maintenance and Operations Manager at (909) 364-2812.