

# **Environmental Impact Report: Proposal to Remove Exotic Plants and Revegetate Habitat with Natives at Merritt College and Neighboring Leona Heights Park (5/20/94)**

## **Location**

The campus property sprawls up a hillside to a housing development (to the East), to the parking lot just above Leona Heights Park which extends beneath Campus Drive and through which the newly restored York Trail runs (to the north), to the very edge of the steep hill overlooking the Bay (to the West), and to the area just above the Ridgemont housing development (to the South). Refer to maps in **Appendix A** for details on the exact site location and rough sketches that serve as range maps of exotics.

It should be noted at the outset that Leona Heights Park is not part of the campus property. Instead, it is technically a city park, but Merritt College values it greatly both for its immediate proximity to the campus and the reliance students and faculty of environmental studies place upon this unique parcel of land.

## **Existing Conditions**

General investigations of the campus grounds were conducted on various days (during March and April of the 1994 Spring Semester). Only a handful of very small broom plants were recorded on the campus proper. The vast majority of exotics were observed by the writer of this report to be situated on the outer fringes of the campus. The degree of severity of the infestations of exotic plants ranged from "virtually non-existent" on the campus *per se* (Note: *Much of the entrance to the campus as one walks from the bus shelters to the buildings is largely barren, strewn with rock fill dating from the time of the original campus construction some twenty-five years ago. For the reason that it is largely devoid of any threatening exotics, it could be argued that native restoration should be initiated fairly soon. Such species as lupine and California poppies might be considered reasonable candidates for revegetating this area quickly and at comparatively low cost.*), to "light-moderate" in the northwest parking area just south of the vernal pools, to "moderate" at the overlook just due west of the parking area, to "well developed and spreading" on the hillside above the athletic fields, to "severely infested" in Leona Heights Park in the riparian zone, through which the recently rebuilt York Trail closely follows the lower part of Leona Creek beneath Campus Drive. It might be a challenge to find a denser area of broom anywhere.

## **Proposed Project**

It is advised that all seriously invasive exotics identified on campus be accurately marked on a map and removed in a methodical manner. Plants native to this area should replace these exotics.