

DATE: November 23, 2015
TO: RMC Governing Board
FROM: Mark Stanley, Executive Officer
SUBJECT: Item 8D: Project and Liaison Activities

Regional Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Planning: DWR released their Draft Funding Recommendation for the Prop 84 IRWM 2015 Implementation Grant Solicitation. The Greater Los Angeles Committee (GLAC) region is recommended to receive \$27,742,975. However, GLAC's total grant request was \$35.2 million. The GLAC Leadership Committee will consider options for reallocating funds to meet the grant award at the next meeting scheduled for December 9, 2015. The Upper Santa Clara River IRWM was not awarded any funds for its request of \$16,229,000 in project funds.

San Gabriel Mountains National Monument: The US Forest Service hosted the one-year anniversary celebratory call to action of the National Monument on Friday October 16, 2015 along the East Fork of the San Gabriel River at the site of the RMC-funded Cattle Canyon Project, implemented by Watershed Conservation Authority in partnership with the Angeles National Forest. Staff from the WCA and RMC attended this work day and celebration as well a variety of NGOs and volunteers including young students from schools in the San Gabriel Valley. Rep. Judy Chu also announced that her office would introduce a new bill that will expand the monument westerly, taking in parts of the Arroyo Seco above Pasadena and La Cañada Flintridge as well as popular forest hiking trails in Chantry Flt north of Sierra Madre.

The San Gabriel Mountains National Monument Community Collaborative continues to meet monthly to provide recommendation to the U.S. Forest Service for development of an interim national monument forest plan. The group is supporting the Forest Service with comments on the "Need to Change" assessment under development. There are four Need to Change Committee working groups providing comments on Transportation, Land Use, Minerals, and Recreation. RMC Board member Margaret Clark, Mayor of Rosemead is Co-Chair of the Land Use Committee.

Following the October 10, 2014 Presidential Proclamation establishing the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument, two separate planning processes have been initiated. The first is the preparation of an amendment to the Angeles National Forest Land Management Plan, referred to as the Monument Management Plan. When complete, the resulting planning document will guide management of monument resources for the next 10 to 15 years. The process to develop that plan includes public input as mandated by the 2012 U.S. Forest Service Planning Rule, which requires transparent, thoughtful and frank deliberation and engagement of diverse perspectives and interest. In formally initiating this planning process, the Angeles National Forest held a series of public meetings earlier this summer in June 2015. These meetings provided the public, agencies, and other groups an opportunity to learn about the Monument, speak directly with Forest Service staff, and provide input into the Management Plan. The second planning activity involves the establishment of a San Gabriel Mountains National Monument Community Collaborative. An emerging purpose for this Community Collaborative is to represent diverse stakeholder perspectives in identifying, prioritizing, and advocating for investments, management objectives, and values that sustainably benefit the Angeles National Forest, the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument, and all the communities throughout the region.

San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act: Following Congresswomen Judy Chu's announcement at the one-year anniversary of the National Monument (discussed in the above section), on October 23, 2015 the Congresswomen introduced H.R. 3820, the San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act to the 114th Congress. This bill, which has been referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources, includes two objectives: 1) expansion of the National Monument and 2) establishment of the San Gabriel National Recreation Area. The National Monument expansion would extend the recently designated San Gabriel Mountains National Monument boundary to include the western areas the San Gabriel Mountains currently held within the Angeles National Forest. Establishment of the San Gabriel National Recreation Area would create a National Recreation Area (NRA) along the Foothills, San Gabriel River and Rio Hondo corridors, and the western Puente-Chino Hills.

The San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act is different from the old H.R. 4858, the San Gabriel National Recreation Area Act, introduced by the Congresswomen during the 113th Congress. Since the introduction of H.R. 4858 last year, President Obama declared a large portion of the San Gabriel Mountains a National Monument. The new bill reflects this change by expanding Monument protections for the western portions of the Angeles National Forest. In the new bill, the National Monument and NRA are separate units. In H.R. 4858, the Angeles National Forest was part of the NRA.

RMC will continue to track the bill. Co-sponsors included Congressman Tony Cardenas (D-CA29) and Adam Schiff (D-CA28). Proposed Wilderness additions and Wild and Scenic River designations within the Angeles National Forest are also being tracked by the RMC staff.

RMC ACTIVE PROJECTS

Azusa Geology Park (RMC10009): The City of Azusa, in cooperation with California Resource Connections (CRC) developed a City owned parcel into a geology interpretive park. The park is approximately 0.5-acre located east of the San Gabriel River Bike Trail and will create new access to the San Gabriel River regional bike trail connecting it to a quarter mile of underutilized City trail enhanced with native landscaping and interpretative signage. Construction was completed on December 30, 2013 and the City of Azusa along with the RMC are working to close out the grant and reimbursements by December 30, 2015.

Coyote Creek-Los Alamitos Improvement Project (RMC3318): The City of Los Alamitos finalized this project and had a Grand Opening for the trail improvements in July 2015. Part of this trail improvement included finalizing a Joint Use Agreement with the LA County Flood Control District to update the existing Use Agreement for the bikeway to include operation and maintenance of the Coyote Creek river trail that runs through the city's limits. The park boasts a walking trail, native landscape, seating area, interpretive graphics and decorative ironwork sculpted gate to the River trail. The City requested a timeline extension through December 30, 2015 to close out the grant.

De Forest Park Wetland Restoration Project (RMC10006): The RMC approved a grant amendment to amend the scope of work, timeline, tasklist and budget given the bids exceeded the funding available for this project. Currently the City of Long Beach is coordinating with their grantor agencies, the Coastal Conservancy and the Natural Resources Agency to determine if the revised scope of work will indeed fulfill the intent of the grant funds. Once all the grantees have approved the revised timeline and budget, then the City will rebid the project which is tentatively scheduled for the winter of 2015.

Camp Shiwaka Urban Forest and Discovery Trail (RMC 13005): RMC provided funding for the development and enhancement of Camp Fire's urban forest and a new trail at Camp Shiwaka which includes extensive native landscaping, interpretive signage, improved ADA accessibility and additional improvements to the outdoor amphitheater. Camp Shiwaka has received additional funds to complete their trail improvements as part of the Long Beach Bike Trail and with matching funds from the LA County Prop A funds with a completion date of June 30, 2016.

Willowbrook Walking Path/Compton Creek (14003): The RMC will be providing a grant in the amount of \$300,000 to the Los Angeles Conservation Corps as part of the Willowbrook Walking Path Compton Creek extension. The LACC applied for an Urban Greening Grant through the Strategic Growth Council and was awarded the full request in the amount of \$798,815. Additional matching funds were committed by other project partners including the State Coastal Conservancy and the Office of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas (2nd District). Matching funds provided by the funding partners and the grant funds received by the Strategic Growth Council bring the total project cost to \$1,698,815.

This project includes the creation of a ½ mile permeable walking path and 2,700 linear foot by 6 foot riprap swale constructed with river rock to capture debris and treat runoff before it enters Compton Creek.

San Gabriel River Trail Signage Improvements (RMC12002): The outcome of this project is to improve interpretive signage along the San Gabriel River bike trail throughout the City of Azusa and include areas south of the Azusa Geology Park to the current trail end along Highway 39 near the entrance to the Azusa River Wilderness Park.

The project elements will include; 1. Placement of mileage reference signage to key locations and features along the trail, 2. Re-design and replacement of insufficient interpretive signage along the San Gabriel River bike trail and 3. Installation of a "staging area" signs visible from Highway 39. Currently the grantee has completed design work of the interpretative signage but has requested a timeline extension through July 30, 2016 to close out the grant.

El Dorado Nature Center South Lake Restoration Project (RMC13004): The project is located at the El Dorado Nature Center in the City of Long Beach and includes an improved arrival experience with a new entry statement and signage, improvements to the outdoor amphitheater for educational sessions and events and an ADA compliant pedestrian bridge and trails leading from the parking lot entrance to the El Dorado Nature Center building. The City of Long Beach has completed construction documents and the City will select the contractor by February 2016.

Los Cerritos Wetlands Trails Improvement Project (RMC14002): This project is located in the City of Long Beach at intersection of Studebaker Road and Westminster Avenue. The grant agreement includes: (1) development and improvements of trail network in and around Los Cerritos Wetlands specifically at Zedler Marsh, (2) install interpretive signage and associated native landscaping and (3) remove trash, debris, non-native plants, improve fencing and gates, install temporary irrigation and improve the native plant nursery through development of an outdoor laboratory and classroom. Currently the LCWA is obtaining coastal developmental permits for the proposed work.

WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Azusa River Wilderness Park Project: Azusa River Wilderness Park (RWP) is an approx. 75.7 acre property which is slated to provide unique wilderness experiences in the lower San Gabriel River Canyon: engaging landscapes, gathering spaces, thriving habitats, and a regional hub and welcome center for the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument.

Based on the 2012 adopted RWP Master Plan, staff is currently reviewing the design development of the RWP Entry Improvements. Key benefits of the RWP Entry Project include conserving and enhancing open space, preserving ecologically significant land for the public, encouraging outdoor activity, and providing facilities to cultivate awareness, appreciation, and stewardship of our natural resources. A proposed open-air pavilion and interactive nature play area embody these benefits as central parts of the plan to draw people into the park, providing enriching spaces to experience, and to engage the public in exploration.

Design development of the RWP Entry Improvements continues on schedule. WCA is finalizing a Draft IS/MND relating to the project, and intends to release the document for public review throughout December and early January. The WCA is scheduled to consider adoption of a Final IS/MND and Mitigation Monitoring Plan at its January 21st Board meeting. A 90% PS&E package is scheduled for completion in April 2016, with permitting running through a minim of twelve months.

Additionally, on November 3rd the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved a \$997,000 competitive grant award from the County park and Open Space District. This grant funds development of Entry Improvements that includes a natural plan area and multi-use pavilion. WCA is currently seeking other grant funding opportunities to fund the remainder of the project, estimated at a total of \$8.5 million.

Citrus Grove Heights Bike Stop A concept plan for this pocket park on the San Gabriel River Trail has received preliminary approval from stakeholders. Development for permitting is underway. The Flood Control District is currently reviewing their capacity to assist with engineering tasks under the Joint Powers Authority (JPA) agreement with the WCA. Feedback and preliminary approvals have supported bikeway access into the site, prefabricated shade structure, on-site storage, hitching posts, a bike service station, interpretive site elements, and native landscaping.

Duck Farm Project: LA County departments are reviewing and commenting on 2nd submittal plans for final permit plan check approvals. A red team has been called for November 18th to aid in completing the permit process and obtain approval for construction. Once plans are approved for construction the bid process will begin.

Emerald Necklace: The WCA is managing the Emerald Necklace Feasibility Study and Implementation Planning Project with the purpose of identifying trail connection and urban greening projects throughout the 17-mile network. This work is being conducted in collaboration with members of the Emerald Necklace Coordination Committee, which includes staff from the RMC, Amigos de los Rios, County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation, Los Angeles Flood Control District, and County of Los Angeles First Supervisorial District.

From August through November the project planning consultants have been conducting updates to the project description for the 16 identified Phase 1 Implementation Projects. Once complete these description will form the basis of the development of an implementation plan and a Programmatic EIR.

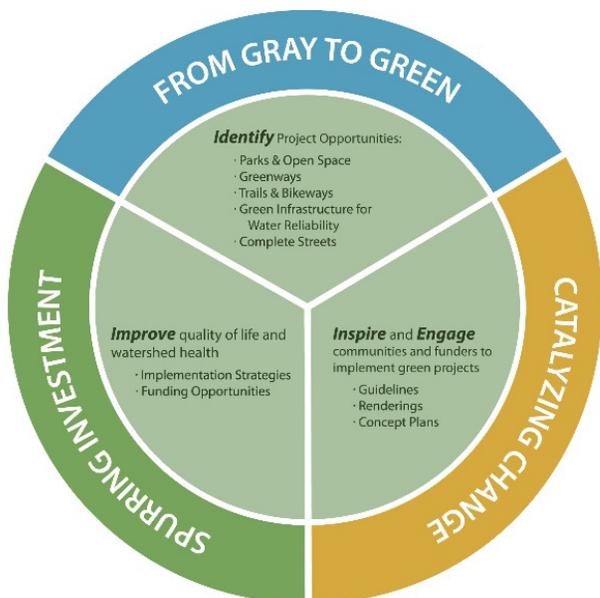
These planning documents, slated to be completed over the next six to seven months, will position these projects for effective and efficient implementation among the various Emerald Necklace partner agencies, with the plans clearly identifying implementation steps, required funding, and further environmental documentation that will be required.

Gateway Cities and Rivers Urban Greening Master Plan:

The WCA, together with North East Trees and Amigos de los Rios is hosting a second project kickoff event focused on the San Gabriel River at the Camp Fire Long Beach lodge today at 6pm, Monday November 23. This event follows the first co-hosted with the UCLA Luskin Center in August that was focused on the Lower Los Angeles River

With a grant from the Strategic Growth Council and partner collaboration the WCA is developing a visionary green infrastructure plan for the Gateway Cities Region. The purpose is to provide a planning document and tools that support cities and the region to move coordinated projects forward for the improvement of health and the environment within the Gateway Cities and along the lower Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers. These projects will include green infrastructure, parks, trails, greenways, and river linkages.

Working within an evolving framework the project team is reviewing local and regional plans, collecting relevant data, and conducting preliminary analyses to inventory existing conditions. Additionally, WCA staff is reviewing options to host the final plan online in a digital format.



Staff continues to build contacts and relationships to direct the project and planned initiatives moving forward. Updates have been made to the Gateway Council of Governments Board of Directors, City Managers, City Planning Directors, and transportation committees, and also to the Gateway Water Management Authority Board. This collaboration is part of a larger effort to work with municipalities, government entities, NGO's and interested parties active in the Gateway Cities and adjacent region.

The underlying purpose of the plan depicted here represents matching green projects with tools and funding opportunities to advance environmental and social benefits. An open data supported plan can lead to the establishment of a region-wide planning information tool consistent with the larger watershed and greater LA region.

Mount Baldy Wilderness Preserve: As a final component of the Mount Baldy Wilderness Preserve Acquisition, Max Evangelista with Boy Scout Troop 403 (Claremont, CA) planned and implemented a service project on September 20, 2015 to install operational signage, including rule signs and cautions signs at two parking areas, and two 'No Jumping Off Bridge' signs at the Barrett-Stoddard Road crossing of San Antonio Creek. The service project was completed as Max's Eagle Scout Service Project. Rule signs indicate the property boundaries, and identifies the WCA as the property owner and land manager. Warning signs include flash flooding and rock slide advisories.



San Gabriel River Confluence with Cattle Canyon Project: The Cattle Canyon Project seeks to address unsustainable recreation practices, which includes habitat disturbance and increased risk to human health from water contact recreation. Other goals of the project seek to improve safety, and to enhance the visitor experience and quality of recreational amenities provided along the river.

The current Phase 1 of Cattle Canyon Project includes both a planning study and an outreach program focused on the prevention of specific harmful recreational behaviors through an information campaign meant to build awareness among site users. The planning study, includes a comprehensive site assessment and conceptual planning process that has identified opportunities for physical improvements, as well as to a lesser extent, management considerations that will improve site conditions.

With comments received from the Angeles National Forest and members of the project's advisory committee on three draft site programming options, the WCA and its consultants are currently producing a Final Concept Site Program and Report. Once developed, the design plan will undergo a joint CEQA/NEPA review process, which will include a public comment period. The environmental review process will begin in early 2016.

South Gate Habitat Restoration Project/Parque dos Rios: Plan check comments are being received from permitting agencies. North East Trees will update plan set for comments and resubmit for approvals. Water service application to the City of South Gate has been processed and paid for.

LACFCD is reviewing application for approval to extend water lines from meter to project site that will encroach on Flood Control property utilizing already in place connection points. ACOE has approved the water line and modification to the trail stop overlook.

Walnut Creek Habitat & Open Space: Acquired in 2008, the Walnut Creek Habitat and Open Space Property is a total of approx. 60.8 acres. It is located directly east of Bonelli Regional Park and along the Walnut Creek riparian corridor. Approximately 6.7 acres are owned by the City of San Dimas and 54 acres are owned by the WCA. The City's portion is directly adjacent to the Loma Vista Park, creating a continuous property that will enlarge the park and open it up to the natural open space area.

After completing a conceptual development plan for the site in coordination with the City of San Dimas, the City secured County Proposition A funding in the amount of \$850,000 to begin Phase 1 development including trail development and public access.

The City and WCA are continuing to collaborate through the CEQA review and documentation process, and in planning for the development of Phase 1.

A Draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Deceleration (MND) document was prepared and circulated for public review from May 12th to June 10th of 2015. During this review agency and public comments relative to environmental and non-environmental topics were collected; many comments were from local residences that were concerned with potential impacts of the project. Concerns included traffic congestion, loss of privacy, loss of views, and noise. In light of voiced concerns the WCA, as CEQA lead agency, is working with the City staff to study modifications to the conceptual development plan before proceed with a Final MND. In addition to internal studies the WCA and City staff are also meeting with a group of local residences to listen to and consider their recommendation.

It is anticipated that the WCA and City will prepare one or more proposals to modify the conceptual development plan. These will be presented to the community for further comments before any action is taken to complete the CEQA process or begin Phase 1 development.

SAN GABRIEL RIVER DISCOVERY CENTER AUTHORITY

San Gabriel River Discovery Center: The SGRDCA Design Team has completed 90% Construction Documents for the first phase of the construction and submitted for plan check approvals. At the board meeting held September 16, 2015, the board heard an update on the EcoVoices program and preparation for National Public Lands Day activity held on September 27, 2015 at El Pueblo in downtown Los Angeles.

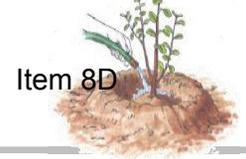
LOS CERRITOS WETLANDS AUTHORITY

The LCWA hired Moffatt & Nichol to complete the restoration feasibility study for the entire Los Cerritos Wetlands and the LCWA Board adopted the Final Conceptual Restoration Plan (CRP) at their August 12, 2015 Board Meeting. The Final CRP has developed several alternatives that will be further analyzed for the development of a preferred alternative through the CEQA/NEPA process. Reports have been completed and are posted on the CRP website, <http://intoloscerritoswetlands.org>.

Currently the LCWA is restoring Zedler Marsh through several grants that were awarded in 2014 including the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District, Fourth Supervisorial District Prop A Funds and RMC Trails Grant. In addition, the LCWA has also entered into contract with Orange County Flood Control District to provide Wetland Restoration Services and Supplies. Following are the upcoming public events for Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewardship Program.



January – June 2016
Public Event Calendar



**ALL PUBLIC EVENTS MEET AT THE
CORNER OF 1st & PCH IN SEAL BEACH**
See map on reverse for location

Upcoming Public Events

Wetlands Habitat Restorations:

LCW Land Trust & Aquarium of the Pacific sponsor Los Cerritos Wetlands restoration and maintenance events

10:30am-12:30pm on the 1st Saturday of each month.*

Upcoming dates: Sat. Jan 2nd, Feb 6th, Mar 5th, Apr 2nd, May 7th, June 4th

Participants are eligible to win a free ticket to the Aquarium of the Pacific and other prizes!

Guided Nature Walks:

LCW Land Trust sponsors monthly Land Tours

8:00 am – 10:00am on the 1st Saturday of each month.*

Contact ejlambe@lcwlandtrust.org for tour details.

Upcoming dates: Sat. Jan 2nd, Feb 6th, Mar 5th, Apr 2nd, May 7th, June 4th

El Dorado Audubon Bird Walks:

El Dorado Audubon sponsors a monthly Bird Walk at Los Cerritos

Starting at 8:00am on the 2nd Saturday of each month.

Contact eldoradoaudubon@yahoo.com for tour details.

Upcoming dates: Sat. Jan 9th, Feb 13th, Mar 12th, Apr 9th, May 14th, June 11th

Wetlands Kayak Tours:

LCW Land Trust sponsors our Kayak Tour program

9:00am – 12:00pm on certain weekend days each month.

Contact ejlambe@lcwlandtrust.org for tour details.

Participate in the **exploration** and **ecological restoration** of 200 acres of coastal habitat at **Los Cerritos Wetlands**

Service-learning credits are provided at all events.

The wetlands are wildlands; please dress accordingly.

Closed toed shoes required.

We encourage reusable water containers.

Children under 14 must be accompanied by an adult.

To learn more about the habitats and animals of Los Cerritos Wetlands, please check our websites:

www.intoloscerritoswetlands.org

www.lcwetlands.org

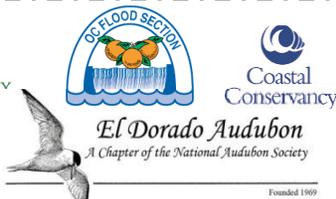
saveloscerritoswetlands on Facebook

To request a restoration or education event for your group or organization, please contact:

iwanttohelp@



Thanks to Our Partners in Conservation:



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