

DATE: January 25, 2016
TO: RMC Governing Board
FROM: Mark Stanley, Executive Officer
SUBJECT: Item 7D: Project and Liaison Activities

Regional Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Planning: The San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers Mountains Conservancy and all members of the Leadership Committee will move to adopt Memorandum of Understanding and Operating Guidelines renewing commitment to participate in the policy, evaluation, and selection of projects of regional benefit. The recommitment is based on the regional plan update, which among other items includes identification and development of multi-purpose projects that combine habitat restoration and recreational access with water quality and conservation objectives. The Leadership Committee is in the process of giving consideration to contracting services provided by Disadvantage Community outreach personnel.

San Gabriel Mountains National Monument: 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 to provide comment on Transportation, Land Use, Minerals, and Recreation. Board member Margaret Clark Mayor of Rosemead is Co-Chair of the Land Use Committee.

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 is 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

Watershed Conservation Authority Facebook: A new WCA Facebook page has been launched! Happenings at WCA’s offices in the Canyon are highlighted, along with wildlife sightings, project updates, staff events, and community engagement and outreach notices are being shared. Friend us at Watershed Conservation Authority on Facebook.



Azusa River Wilderness Park Project: The River Wilderness Park (RWP) is an approx. 75.7 acre property 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 for the Canyon Inn Property, staff is currently reviewing the design development of the RWP Entry Improvements. Key benefits of this project include enhancing the park space, preserving ecologically significant land for the public, encouraging low-impact outdoor activities, 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.

During the Fall of 2015 draft project-level environmental analysis and documentation for the RWP Entry Improvements was updated pursuant to the Californian Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to also incorporate program-level review of all the proposed improvements on the Canyon Inn Property to study the cumulative impacts for the full development of the site. This includes all planned park

development not previously reviewed under the existing RWP Mitigated Negative Declaration for the El Encanto Property. The resulting Programmatic Initial Study and Draft Mitigated Declaration was released for public review on December 2, 2015 with a 30-day public review to solicit comments and input. To accommodate the holidays, one week was added to the public review period. Written comments were due to the WCA by January 7, 2015. Multiple agency comment letters were received. However no general public comments were submitted. WCA staff and the environmental consultant, ECORP are currently responding to comments and preparing a final document. Considered for adoption is scheduled for the March WCA meeting.

To fund these proposed improvements, staff has also prepared and submitted several grant proposals over the course of the past nine months totaling approximately \$4.5M in funding request. Details of these grant proposals are included under a separate agenda item.

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 descriptions 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: 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.

WCA held the second community outreach meeting in November following the LA River workshop in August, this time focused on the Lower San Gabriel River. The public engagement meeting was hosted by Camp Fire Long Beach in the lodge meeting room (seen at left). Attendees represented equestrian and cycling groups, interest citizens, non-profits, city staff and officials from the region.

Staff coordinated focus groups to give feedback through a mapping exercise, following presentations from partner groups that set the context for the greening plan:

- Regional Greening: Claire Robinson, Amigos de los Rios
- Gateway Active Transportation: Kekoa Anderson, Gateway Cities COG
- OC Loop: Mark Lopez, Office of Orange County 4th District Supervisor Shawn Nelson
- Urban Natural Restoration: Ray Thorn, Friends of the Colorado Lagoon

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

Staff also continues to build contacts and relationships to form a Technical Advisory Committee to direct the project and planned initiatives moving forward. This collaboration is part of a larger effort to work with both municipalities, government entities, NGO's and interested parties active in the Gateway Cities and adjacent region.

The goals and objectives of the plan are depicted in the following graphic and will be the basis for matching grey to green projects with greening tools and with funding opportunities within a final open source platform. An open data supported plan can lead to the establishment of a region-wide planning tool that is 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.

Present project activities include WCA and Angeles National Forest's administrative review of the Final Concept Site Plan & Programming report. Once administrative review is complete the design plan will undergo a joint CEQA/NEPA analysis process, which will include a public review period. This environmental analysis and review will complete Phase 1 of the Cattle Canyon Project..

South Gate Habitat Restoration Project/Parque dos Rios: North East Trees, as the architect of record, is in the process of picking-up 2nd submittal comments on the permit packages plan set received from City and easement holders. Comment clarifications are pending from City and Caltrans, once received the plans will be resubmitted for approvals.

WCA completed application for new water line to supply irrigation to the site and paid new development meter fee to the City of South Gate. City of South Gate to proceed with installing the new water meter and point of connection on Southside of the Imperial Highway. ACOE has given approval to run new water line along channel utilizing LACFCD uni-strut connection points. LACFCD has also approved the water line connection. An encroachment permit is pending.

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

The SGRDCA Design Team has completed 90% Construction Documents for the first phase of the construction, attended a red team plan check review meeting with County and is currently receiving comments back for pick-up. County Parks is working with Army Corps of Engineers to obtain a letter of fees for Administrative Review, so funds can be provided to AOCE in order for them to review and comment on the permit set. The license document is with County Parks for review and processing. SGRDCA and Parks both submitted grant applications to RMC's Prop 1 call for projects, wetland and recycled water line projects respectively. SGRDCA Board on January 19, 2016 will consider a resolution to approve of an amendment to the professional services contract with Watershed Conservation Authority for continued support of San Gabriel River Discovery Center activities. WCA's Board took action to approve entering into an agreement for professional services for the project at the March 19, 2015 board meeting (Resolution 2015-13). A separate resolution for professional administrative services in support of SGRDCA is on the current agenda for Board consideration.

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.