

DATE: May 21, 2020

TO: Watershed Conservation Authority Governing Board

FROM: WCA Staff

THROUGH: Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Item 08: Liaison and Activities Report

PROJECTS OF SIGNIFICANT INTEREST

San Gabriel Mountains National Monument: At the March meeting of the San Gabriel Mountains Community Collaborative, staff of the Angeles National Forest (ANF) gave an update on the ANF's response to COVID-19. All campgrounds and developed recreation sites throughout the Monument and forest, as well as certain popular trails, were temporarily closed. However, many facilities and trails have reopened with new social distancing guidelines as of May 15. Parking lots, picnic areas and restrooms are open as well as Mt. Pacifico, Chilao, Manker Flat and Millard unreserved campgrounds. Seasonal campgrounds will remain closed.

The following trails and roads are open as of May 15:

- Trail heads and trails at San Antonio Falls, Icehouse Canyon and North Devil's Backbone, routes that lead to the top of 10,050-foot Mt. Baldy. In the same area, trails to Telegraph Peak, Timber Mountain, the Three Ts, Bighorn Peak and the Chapman Trail.
- Trails to Millard Canyon, Mt. Wilson, Gabrielino Trail, Rim Trail, Valley Forge Trail, Sam Merrill Trail, San Gabriel Peak, El Prieto, Ontario Peak, Bear Canyon Loop Trail, Sunset Ridge and others in the San Gabriel Mountains north of Los Angeles.
- The Mt. Wilson Toll Road and fire roads to Big Santa Anita Canyon, Mt. Lowe, Gould Mesa, Arroyo Seco Road, Mt. Lukens Road and others.



San Gabriel Mountains Community Collaborative: On March 26, 2020, the SGMCC held a virtual meeting via Zoom. Daniel Rossman was elected to Steering Committee Chair and Liz Reilly was elected Vice Chair.

All Ad Hoc committees gave updates and presentations. The Angeles National Forest gave an update on USFS's response to COVID-19. The next meeting will be held on May 28, 2020.

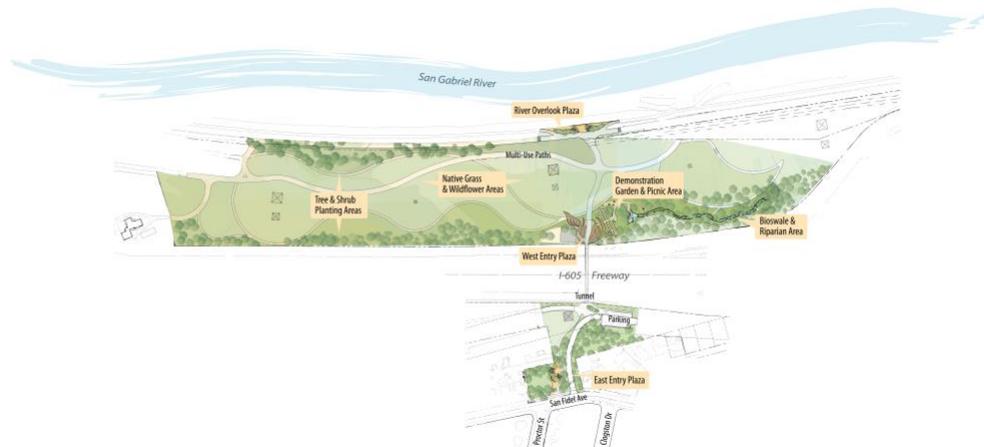
The SGMCC has a Steering Committee and four topical ad-hoc Committees working to enhance National Monument management and accessibility for local communities in four areas: Trails and Recreation, Transportation, Volunteer Engagement, and Conservation Education. Meetings occur every other month.

WCA PROJECTS & PROPERTIES

Duck Farm Project: Construction work continued through the end of March 2020, though the schedule was impacted significantly in March by a higher than normal number of rain days and other days where the site was too saturated for the scheduled grading, bioswale construction, hardscape construction, and landscape construction to continue. A number of important tasks/deliverables have been completed, and their status is as shown below:

- 100% of SCE undergrounding of their above ground facilities
- 90% of the landscape mounds once SCE was able to underground their facilities
- 95% completion of the upper riparian bioswale construction
- 90% of the site utilities, including new potable water and fire lines to the Farmhouse location, and the new ROMTEC restroom
- 70% of all irrigation in the park
- 75% of all tree planting in the park
- 50% of all hardscape in the park
- 100% of the structural steel for the overhead structures

Due to both the significant number of rain days in March and vendor impacts from the COVID-19 shutdowns in California and other states, the project has experienced significant delays in order fulfillment for most of our fabricated site facilities. As a result, our General Contractor, Fast-Track Construction, has been essentially de-mobilized since the end of February 2020. The contractor is optimistic that they will be able to mobilized again in June 2020, at which time the General Contractor will be able to provide an updated project completion schedule.



Updated illustrative site plan for the Duck Farm River Park currently under construction.

The Phase 1A Duck Farm project involves the development of a 30+ acre river adjacent park project that includes a neighborhood park entry, public access trails, riparian landscape, a native plant demonstration garden, native and low water meadows, a river overlook and interpretation features.

Duck Farm House Landscape and Water Project: In April, the WCA Board approved a grant award from the RMC approximately \$2 million to complete the San Gabriel River Center. Staff will apply for an upcoming County Measure A grant program anticipated to be released in early Fall to fill the current funding gap, and in the meantime the project will be designed relative to the funds on hand.

WCA is also moving forward with its application for Supplementary Environmental Funds in conjunction with the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County. The SEP would augment the Duck Farm House Landscape and Water Project and include additional public amenities and an expanded parking lot. The Work Plan is currently being reviewed by the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board.



Duck Farm House Landscape and Water Project will include the construction of practical landscape-oriented water capture and conservation strategies that average homeowners can achieve in their own landscapes. The Farmhouse will be renovated and transformed into a community resource / visitor center to compliment these conservation gardens and provide additional programming opportunities.

San Gabriel Valley Greenway Network: The San Gabriel Valley Greenway Network Strategic Implementation Plan is a multi-objective effort to transform existing Los Angeles County Flood Control District right of way in the San Gabriel Valley into a world-class Greenway Network in conjunction with identifying ways to upgrade and enhance the District's existing flood control facilities. The Plan will build upon the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments' (SGVCOG) ongoing Active Transportation Planning Initiative - Greenway Feasibility Study and will highlight connectivity with other planned active transportation components and green urban infrastructure projects throughout the San Gabriel Valley.

The Plan will accelerate development of greenway design standards and create cooperative agreements with other agencies to expedite project delivery for shovel ready projects. This approach will enable

simultaneous implementation of high priority greenway projects while ensuring consistency with the broader master planning of the Greenway Network.

Emerald Necklace: WCA participated in a call with Parks and Recreation, LA County Transportation Planning, LA County Flood Control District to discuss the San Jose Creek Bridge and trail project and provided design documents related to the Duck Farm to the team for their utilization as they design this priority project. County is also working together to resolve internal agreements to ensure the use of the river path as an official County trail. A public outreach meeting specific to this project will occur on May 15 via online video conferencing platform.

The next Emerald Necklace Implementation Strategic Coordination meeting is scheduled for June 2, 2020 and is hosted by Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation Department. The meeting brings together County and WCA staff to more closely collaborate to move projects forward. Priority projects continue to focus on the San Jose Creek Bridge and River Trail extension to the Duck Farm and the Rosemead Blvd complete street project between Legg Lake and Durfee within the Whittier Narrows Recreation Area. This working group will continue to meet in an effort to identify funding, prepare grant applications and seek to partner to develop projects identified in the Emerald Necklace Plan.

EMERALD NECKLACE FEASIBILITY STUDY & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN - PHASE I

The Emerald Necklace is an extraordinary 17-mile loop of bicycle and multi-use trails which links parks and open spaces along two waterways, the San Gabriel River and the Rio Hondo. Phase I's 16 projects will close gaps in this regional recreational trails network and increase access to hundreds of thousands of constituents. Ongoing efforts will also add gateways, signage and greening. Further phases identified in the feasibility study will continue to expand the system in following years, contingent on funding and public support.

Westside Multi-Use Trail: A Trail for All User Groups

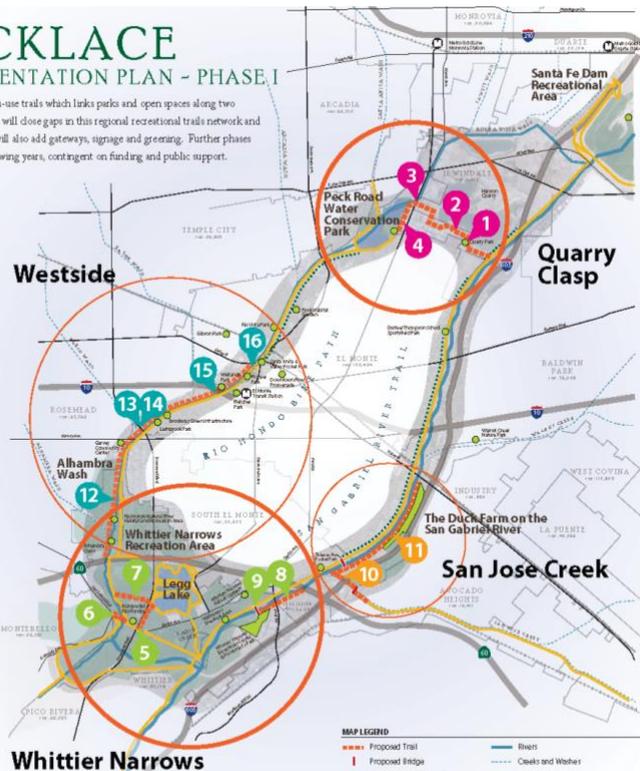
The primary goal of the feasibility study is to create a comprehensive network of Emerald Necklace trail segments, and improve connectivity between them along the Westside Multi-Use Trail corridor.

- 12 Multi-Use Trail: Alhambra Wash from State Highway 40 to the Garvey Community Center with Gates, Signage, etc.
- 13 Underpass at Rosemead Blvd.
- 14 Street Access Ramps at Rosemead Blvd. with Gates & Signage
- 15 10 Freeway Underpass Improvements
- 16 Multi-Use Trail: Rosemead Blvd. to Valley Blvd.

Whittier Narrows Connectivity: Linking Existing Park Resources

This section of the study and the various studies being prepared for the Emerald Necklace project will increase connectivity between existing park resources and the Emerald Necklace.

- 5 Class I Bicycle Path: Adjacent to Rosemead Blvd. to Legg Lake
- 6 Class I Bicycle Path: From El Bronco del Rio Hondo to Lincoln Ave. on San Gabriel Blvd. with Enhanced Signage, Crossing, Signage & Wayfinding
- 7 Class I Bicycle Path: From the Rio Hondo to Legg Lake through the Southern California Edison Encasement
- 8 Multi-Use Trail: Fullerton Village from State Highway 60 to Rosemead Park
- 9 Multi-Use Bridge: Fullerton Bridge at Rosemead Park



Quarry Clasp: Completing the Loop

Multi-Use Trail segment between Peck Road Water Conservation Park and the Duck Farm on the San Gabriel River will connect the Rio Hondo and the San Gabriel River.

- 1 Park Development with Trail, Gates, Signage and Amenities
- 2 Multi-Use Trail and Bike Paths
- 3 Signalized Crossing at Peck Road with Signage and Wayfinding
- 4 Rio Hondo Multi-Use Trail and Class I Bicycle Path: Connects to Peck Road Water Conservation Park

San Jose Creek Regional Access: Connecting Communities East of the San Gabriel River

This section of the study and the various studies being prepared for the Emerald Necklace project will increase connectivity between existing park resources and the Emerald Necklace.

- 10 Multi-Use Trails and 2 Multi-Use Bridges: From San Jose Creek Trail to San Gabriel River Trail
- 11 Multi-Use Trail: From San Jose Creek to the Duck Farm on the San Gabriel River

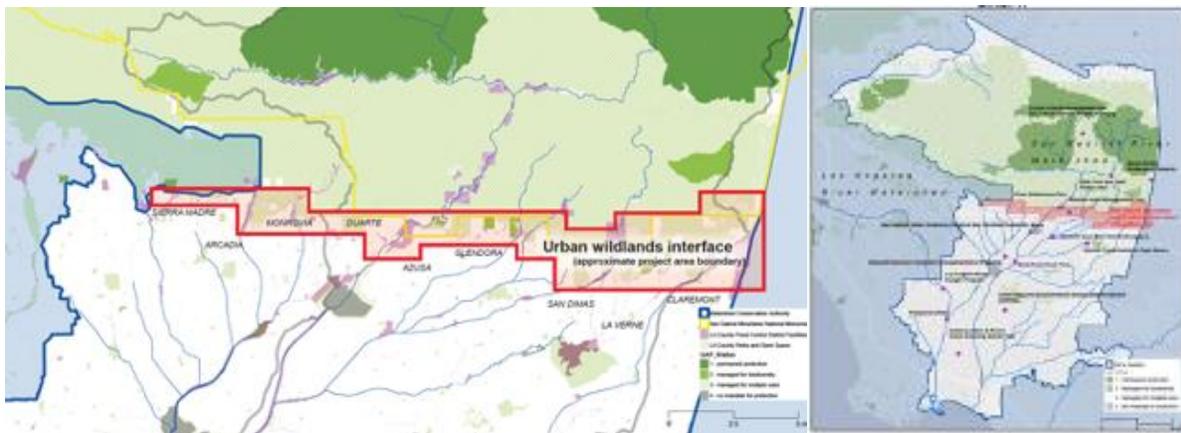


The Emerald Necklace is a 17-mile interconnected network of existing and envisioned bikeways, multi-use trails, parks, and greenways along the Rio Hondo and the San Gabriel River. Along the Rio Hondo the Emerald Necklace stretches from Peck Road Water Conservation Park in the north to the Whittier Narrows Recreation Areas in the south. Along the San Gabriel River, it stretches from Hanson Quarry in the north to Whittier Narrows Recreational Area in the south.

The Emerald Necklace Implementation Plan – Phase 1 (Proposed Project) includes 15 related projects that would close gaps in a regional recreational trails network and increase access to the trails to hundreds of thousands of people in the project area.

San Gabriel Mountains and Foothills Open Space Acquisition Master Plan: Psomas has submitted draft maps of protected lands in the San Gabriel Mountains foothills, and soils, and lists of species of conservation concern potentially occurring in the project area. Conservancies and some municipalities were contacted to confirm the local protected lands database.

An RFP for a consultant to research and produce a report on Human Factors building on Dr. Lee-Anne Milburn’s Initial Report on Human Factors is in progress.



San Gabriel Mountains and Foothills Open Space Acquisition Master Plan Project will develop a comprehensive prioritized acquisition strategy and a recommended resource management and operations strategy to preserve habitat and open space, improve watershed health, and increase public access for compatible uses such as multi-use trails and related passive recreational amenities along the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains.

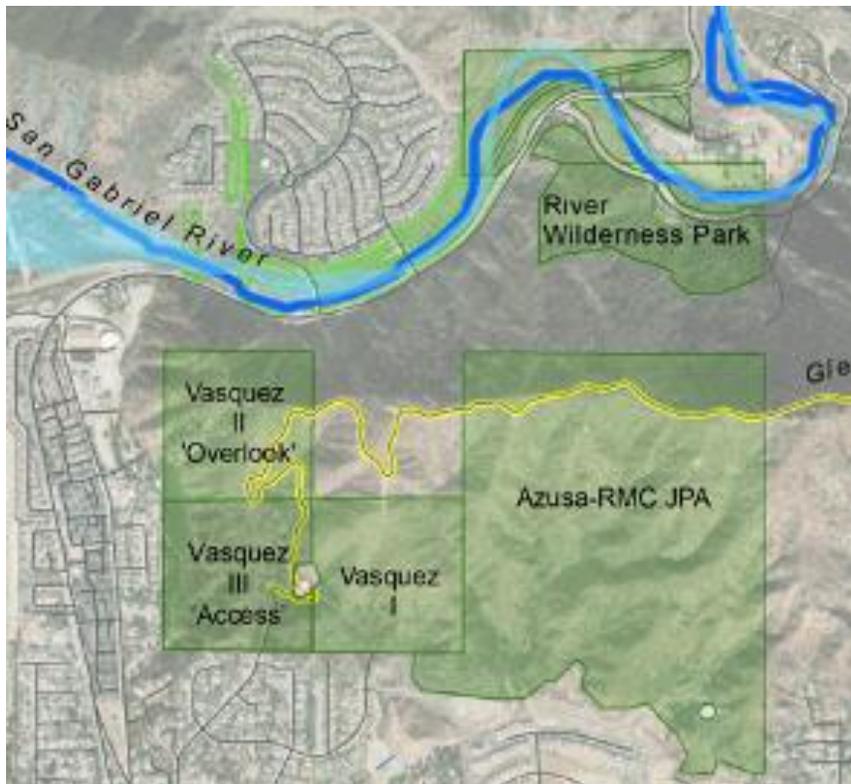
Vasquez Acquisitions and Interim Land Management Plan: The first of four planned botanical surveys of Vasquez Overlook (Vasquez II) took place on April 16, 2020. The Cooper Ecological Monitoring team installed coverboard arrays and remote cameras for collecting data on reptiles, amphibians, and other wildlife. Notable findings included documenting a plant, California copperleaf, *Acalypha californica*, which has not been recorded in LA County since the 1960s. The team also confirmed the presence of a rare snail species with a very limited range of which a large part is in WCA territory. This species is mostly associated with the stretch of the San Gabriel Mountains between Altadena and Azusa. Vasquez Overlook would be on the eastern-most end of the species’ range. This species was once recommended by Center for Biological Diversity for federal protection (special status was not granted). The species’ continued vulnerability to habitat loss, habitat disturbance, fire, and pollution illustrate the need for protection in the San Gabriel Mountain Foothills. The 3-person survey team proposed to conduct survey activity in a manner consistent with the current social distancing requirements. Three remaining field visits will take place before the team submits a final report.

Due diligence on Vasquez III (8684-024-035) continues to progress with investigation into status of the access road which connects Hilltop Drive to the Glendora Ridge Motorway (an unpaved fireroad). This road is currently impassable by vehicles (and a hazard to hikers) due to deep (4') gullying which occurred after from the Colby Fire (2014).

Correspondence with LA County Fire and LA County Department of Public Works has revealed an impasse in the proposed repairs. The City of Azusa sought a collaborative agreement with LA County Fire and Department of Public Works to restore the road. However, since DPW would not have involvement in the roadway or improvements, they were advised by legal counsel not to enter into the agreement.

Before WCA could acquire this land for protection and open space, this impasse would need to be resolved.

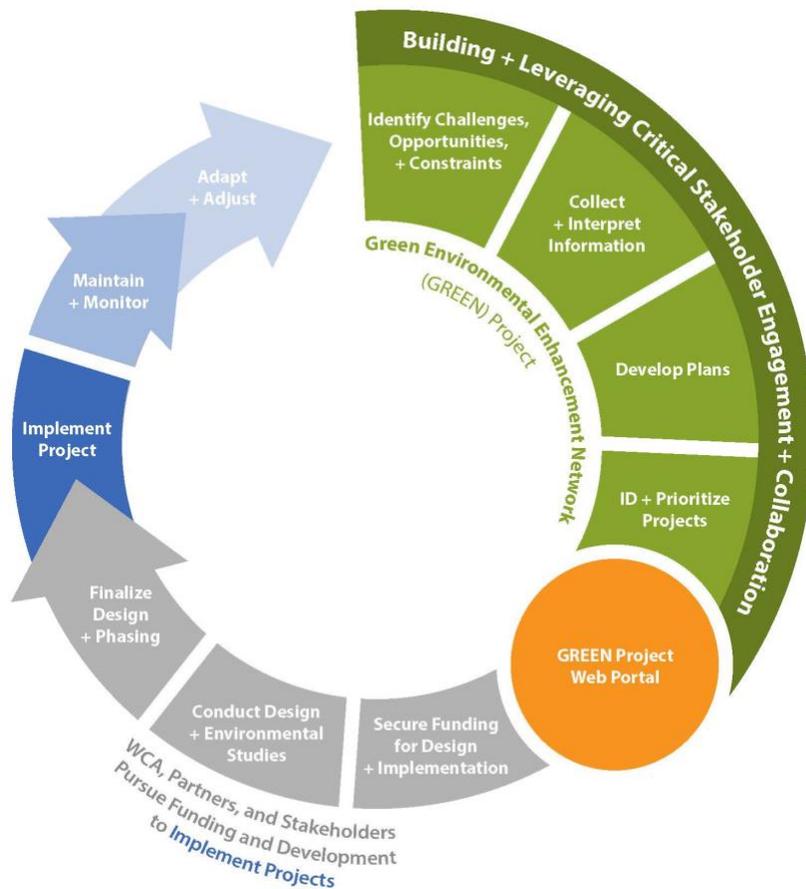
WCA continues to work on clarifying current easement rights on the unpaved road connecting Hilltop Drive to the Glendora Ridge Motorway (an unpaved fire road). The only current easement holder (besides WCA) is the City of Azusa. However, the road is maintained by LA County Fire. Legal counsel has suggested the City of Azusa, the Vasquez Ranch, WCA, and the County all approve, execute, and record a modification of the City's easement to clarify rights over the road. Such agreement is expected to require approvals from the Azusa City Council and the County Board.



The Vasquez acquisitions (Vasquez I in 2016 and Vasquez II in 2020) protect some of the last undeveloped private holdings along the foothill interface between the San Gabriel Valley and the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument from development, in order to support watershed restoration, community-driven stewardship, and compatible public uses. WCA acquisition of these lands augments an existing cluster of

contiguous public conservation lands in the Azusa Foothills that includes WCA's River Wilderness Park, Azusa-RMC Open Space, and City of Pasadena Open Space.

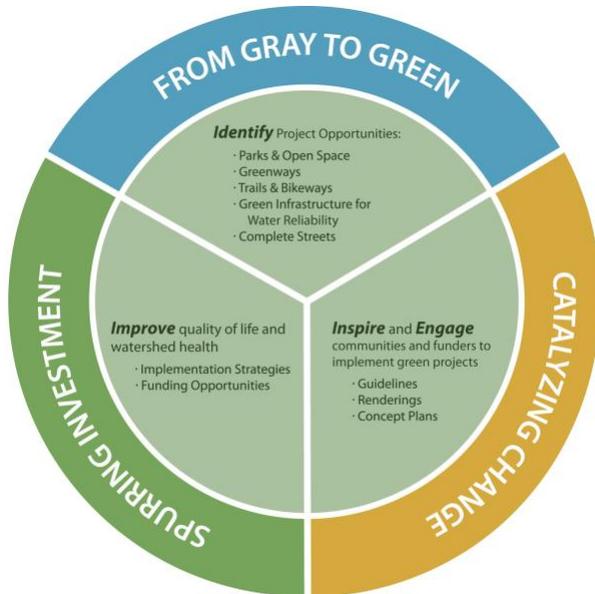
GREEN Project: The GREEN project is a multipart effort by the agency to promote urban greening in the WCA / RMC territory which has included engagement and support for regional plans as well as neighborhood and site-scale opportunities. WCA obtained a scope of work amendment from the RMC for this grant to continue efforts, and to concentrate remaining deliverables on both (1) the Duck Farm Equestrian Center update for water management, habitat, and operations improvements, and (2) for advancing work on the GREEN Project Portal including the release of an RFP for software development.



The Green Regional Environmental Enhancement Network (GREEN) Project is a planning and project implementation initiative supporting watershed-based greening efforts to help support collaboration in the wider Los Angeles and Orange County area. The scope of the project includes regional data collection and assessments, identification of priority projects, and community engagement strategies culminating in the launch of an online GREEN project portal to share data and information, and to catalyze investments and positive change.

Gateway Cities and Rivers Urban Greening Master Plan: Staff are currently drafting and uploading written and visual content to the Gateway Greening website. Lyric Design & Planning has completed its work developing Greenscape maps and City Profile pages and WCA staff are continuing to develop the

Gateway Greening website with a grant from RMC. Due to staff and consultant limitations in response to COVID-19, WCA staff was approved for a 2-month extension on the project through June 2020.



With a grant from the Strategic Growth Council and partner collaboration the WCA is developing a green infrastructure plan for the Gateway Cities Region. The WCA is advancing collaborative integration of regional efforts as staff continues to engage in compatible regional planning initiatives—including the work of the AB530 Lower LA River Working Group. Together with the RMC-funded GREEN Project the plan is organized as an interactive web platform positioned to facilitate coordination, planning efforts, and funding for greening projects across the Gateway Cities and beyond.

Los Angeles River Environmental Flows Study Supplemental Analysis: WCA contributed locations to the SCCWRP flows study model that represent proposed future uses in WCA territory which would be affected by the amount of flow in the channel. These locations include channel reaches in proximity to Ralph C. Dill Park (restoration/channel enhancement proposed by Trout Unlimited); three Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study locations along Compton Creek proposed by US Army Corps of Engineers (Gonzalez Park, Raymond Street Park, and Compton HS); and the Rio Hondo Confluence Area Project (in-channel park access and restoration elements proposed by project lead LACFCD).

Staff attended Stakeholder meeting #4 and Technical Advisory Committee meeting #5.

The purpose of the Supplemental Analysis is to supplement the State Water Board funded Los Angeles River Environmental Flows Study to include a more robust analysis of the potential impacts to recreation, wildlife habitat, and water quality in the Lower Los Angeles River from reduced instream water flows resulting from increased wastewater re-use upstream. An RMC grant funds WCA's participation in the Stakeholder group and adding third-party review of the analysis.

Mt Baldy Wilderness Preserve: As part of the U.S. Forest Service Master Agreement, San Gabriel Valley Conservation Corps spent several weeks at the Preserve, removing invasive broom, painting out graffiti, removing fallen trees that obstructed the trail, and installing new traffic signs to curb illegal parking. The crew also deinstalled and transported the dedication sign to a refinisher.

Dick Swinney, who has been documenting the flora of the San Gabriel Mountains since 1989, has volunteered to create a flora (comprehensive list of occurring plants) of the Mt. Baldy Wilderness Preserve.



Acquired in 2014, the Mt. Baldy Wilderness Preserve is a 237+/- acre property located on the eastern extent of the Authority's territory, directly south of Mt. Baldy Village. This open space being preserved is in its undeveloped state. The site is publicly accessible for passive recreational use.

Crystal Lake Redevelopment and San Gabriel Canyon Master Planning: The U.S. Forest Service Master Agreement, which had a finite life of 5 years and was scheduled to end June 30, 2020, has been granted a 12-month extension in a response to COVID-19 impacts. This decision will benefit the ability of the joint USFS/WCA team to complete the implementation of priority projects within the Crystal Lake Redevelopment and San Gabriel Canyon Recreation Area.

These priority projects include the design and construction of new camp host sites, kiosks and iron rangers at both Crystal Lake and Coldbrook campgrounds. Improvements to the Crystal Lake Visitor Center and the construction of a trash transfer station at Rincon Fire Station site. Additionally, USFS has identified for demolition several old, unused restrooms and dilapidated ancillary buildings. When completed these improvements will be a noticeable and welcome enhancement to the visitor experience.

USFS has completed all internal approvals and clearances related to the decommissioned facilities slated for demolition and the identified facility improvements. Prior to demolition of the identified buildings, USFS staff will conduct a series of Bat surveys and will advise contractor of any additional actions that may need to take place which may include the installation of bat boxes.

Crystal Lake Redevelopment and San Gabriel Canyon Master Planning, authorized by U.S. Forest Service under a Supplemental Project Agreement with WCA, to implement a redevelopment and enhancement conceptual planning effort for the Crystal Lake recreation area located in the Angeles National Forest, as well as, a recreation master plan for the San Gabriel Canyon area focusing on access, circulation, and recreational resources. Additionally, the implementation of maintenance and site improvements has been approved by USFS.

River Wilderness Park: WCA is awaiting notification from RMC of its grant award(s) under the Prop 68 grant program to fill remaining funding gaps. Staff continues to work with City of Azusa, Caltrans, and Design team to complete the design for the overlook and park entry improvement elements of the park.

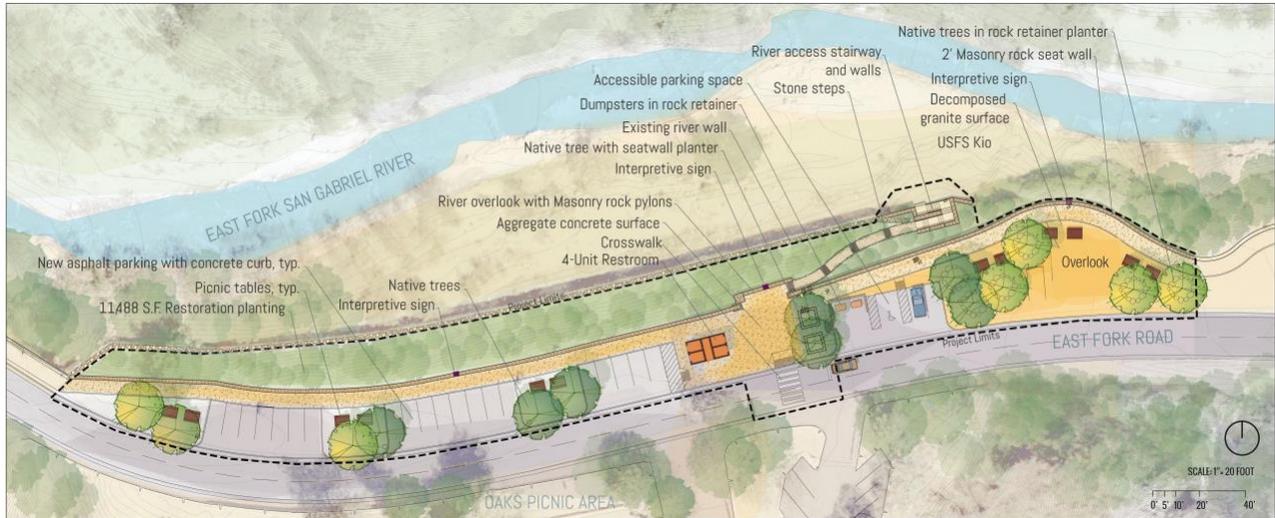
Currently Caltrans is reviewing River Wilderness Park project plans in consideration of including the bikeway underpass below the Highway 39 bridge in environmental compliance documents as they work on bridge improvements. The inclusion of this element in environmental compliance documents would be a step forward in ensuring a safe option to extend and connect the San Gabriel River Trail with River Wilderness Park.



The RWP is an approx. 118-acre property envisioned to provide unique wilderness experiences in the lower San Gabriel River Canyon comprised of engaging landscapes, gathering spaces, thriving habitats, and a regional hub and welcome center for the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument.

San Gabriel River Confluence with Cattle Canyon Project: WCA is awaiting notification from RMC of its grant award for construction of the Oaks River Access Project under the Prop 68 grant. WCA consultant, BlueGreen, has completed its work on the site design for the project, and has begun work on the design of an additional access point which extends the footprint of the current design. This portion will be funded through WCA's Master Participating Agreement with the Forest Service that was just extended for an additional 12-months due to COVID-19 related impacts.

U.S. Forest Service anticipates making a decision of record on the EIS/EIR for the project in 2020.



Initial concept plan for the Oaks River Access project

Along a 2.5-mile segment of the East Fork San Gabriel River recreational use is highly concentrated. This heavy use combined with the lack of facilities has resulted in degraded conditions. In response, the Cattle Canyon Project seeks to better manage the recreational use and balance the needs for resource project within this area of the San Gabriel Mountains.

South Gate Habitat Restoration Project/Parque Dos Rios: The project obtained a County permit amendment approval to install a second southern overlook, relocate a backflow device and make minor modifications to the northern bump-out rest area. Unfortunately, the project is now experiencing a delay to remobilize due to vendor impacts from the COVID-19 shutdowns in California and other states, the project has experienced significant delays in order fulfillment for most of our fabricated site facilities. As a result, our General Contractor, Conservation Corps of Long Beach, has been essentially de-mobilized since February 2020. CCLB is optimistic however that they will be able to mobilized again in June 2020, at which time they will be able to provide an updated project completion schedule.

Additionally, on a Phase II Bioswale project, WCA's Measure W feasibility study to transform the existing Caltrans drainage V-ditch to a nature based riparian bioswale was approved for inclusion in the Lower LA River WASC Stormwater Improvement Plan for funding consideration by LACBOS later this quarter.



Parque Dos Rios is a 7.8-acre site situated along the Lower Los Angeles River (LLAR) at the confluence with the Rio Hondo in the City of South Gate. The project will create a bike stop amenity for the LLAR trail, with overlook, shade structure, seating and interpretive graphics. The land will be planted with natives and a raptor perch installed.

Walnut Creek Habitat & Open Space: Construction of the West Trail Loop has been temporarily delayed due to a significant number of rain days in March and now COVID-19 impacts. The General Contractor, Land Forms, anticipates remobilizing by the end of this month and will provide an updated schedule at that time.

WALNUT CREEK – WEST PHASE ONLY



Acquired in 2008, the Walnut Creek Habitat and Open Space Property is a total of approx. 60.8 acres. Approximately 6.7 acres are owned by the City of San Dimas and 54 acres are owned by the WCA.

City of San Dimas the City secured County Proposition A funding in the amount of \$850,000 to begin initial West Phase development. The initial phase includes trail development and amenities for a looped spur trail, habitat enhancements, and connect to the Antonovich Trail via County-operated trail staging areas.

River Ranger Program Implementation Project: WCA and RMC staff has begun one – on one meetings with project stakeholders to begin to forward the implementation of a Lower LA River REACH zone pilot program this year. COVID19 conditions may impact ability of the project to complete desired level of outreach and public engagement and alternative opportunities and methods are being explored.

To date, the team has met virtually with both the Conservation Corps of Long Beach and Los Angeles Conservation Corps regarding the River Stewards program to provide routine maintenance activities along the REACH zone expected to be between Hollydale Park and Parque Dos Rios in South Gate at the confluence and along the Rio Hondo up to Treasure Island Park in Downey. The first virtual meeting with LA County Flood Control District was held this month regarding their facilities and how the program may serve their needs as well as those of the program and community. A follow-up meeting with LACFCD is planned for early June.



The River Ranger Program will foster connections between communities, agencies, and resources to promote safe, equitable usage and stewardship of the LA River and its tributaries as an activated and connected greenway that supports ecological, social, and recreational opportunities. The Los Angeles River Ranger Program Establishment Plan was finalized in June 2019 and the program is moving toward a pilot project this summer 2020.