

DATE: January 21, 2016

TO: Watershed Conservation Authority Governing Board

FROM: WCA Staff

THROUGH: Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Item7: Liaison and Activities Report

Greater Los Angeles County 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 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.

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.

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.

WCA PROJECTS

Citrus Grove Heights Bike Stop: A concept plan for this pocket park on the San Gabriel River Trail (shown of the following page) has received preliminary approval to include prefabricated shade structure, bike service station, on-site storage, hitching posts, interpretive site elements, seating areas, and a swale to capture water and provide habitat. Staff is writing a request for proposal against the Master Agreement to complete design documents to obtain LACFCD, Army Corps and City permit requirements. Staff is also exploring opportunities for partnerships to provide cashflow support for this fast track reimbursable project funded through Natural Resources Agency.

Duck Farm Project: A red team meeting was held in late November with LA County representatives to discuss completing the permit plan check reviews for the project. To date, comments from all departments except for plumbing have been received and are being picked up by AECOM with a target resubmittal date of February 1. Caltrans comments have been received and SCE's consent letter is pending engineering review and costing for the climb guards required to be installed on the new TRTP towers on site.

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.

The project planning consultants continue to conduct 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: 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.



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.

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 of recreating along the river.

The current Phase 1 of the Cattle Canyon Project has seen the development of an outreach program focused on the prevention of specific harmful recreational behaviors. Two seasons of implementation have been completed during the Summers of 2013 and 2014. The remaining Phase 1 project component is the completion of a planning study. The study includes a comprehensive site assessment and conceptual planning process to identify opportunities for physical site improvements, as well as to a lesser extent, management considerations that will improve environmental 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.

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 analysis and documentation process, and in planning for the development of Phase 1.

A Draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Deceleration (MND) document was prepared for the complete vision presenting within the adopted Conceptual Master Plan. This draft was circulated for public review from May 12th to June 10th of 2015. During the 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. In light of voiced concerns the WCA is working with the City staff to study modifications to the conceptual development plan before proceeding with a Final MND and Phase 1 development. In addition to internal studies the WCA and City staff have also met with an organized group of local residences to listen to and consider their recommendations.

It is anticipated that the WCA and City will prepare one joint proposals to modify the Conceptual Master Plan. These will be presented at a community workshop for further comments before any action is taken to further project implementation.