

DATE: January 21, 2016

TO: Watershed Conservation Authority Governing Board

FROM: Joseph Gonzalez, Associate Project Manager

THROUGH: Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Item 16: Consideration of a resolution to authorize a grant application to the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy for the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers Watershed Green Regional Environmental Enhancement Network (GREEN) Project.

RECOMMENDATION: The WCA Board authorize an application for grant funds from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy in the amount of \$650,000 to fund program support of a San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers Watershed Green Regional Environmental Enhancement Network (GREEN) Project.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Under the original 2008-2014 Watershed Coordinator Program the WCA provided invaluable services to advance the mission of the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC). WCA staff proposes to apply for funding from the RMC to again dedicate staff time to critical initiatives and projects integral to the efforts of the RMC.

BACKGROUND: In 2008 the Watershed Conservation Authority teamed with the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments after it was awarded a grant from the Department of Conservation to support the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. This partnership was focused on the efficient use of water supply, improvements in water quality, and ecosystem restoration by forwarding and facilitating projects, plans, and programs within the San Gabriel and Rio Hondo watersheds. The program addressed education, outreach, planning, policy, and partnership-building to advance water quality and security, habitat quality, open space, and recreational opportunities within the watershed and surrounding region.

In July 2008 the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) supported the Watershed Program by approving a grant (RMC08107) in the amount of \$250,000 for staffing, coordination support, technical assistance in the implementation of the Watershed Program, and for strategies and resources that support the goals of the RMC. The WCA role in the Watershed Coordinator program was completed in 2014, and all funds were expended.

The work provided by the original Watershed Program proved highly beneficial in moving projects forward and creating a vision for new projects. Measurable benefits from the 2008-2014 Watershed Program included the identification of projects, programs, and policies, and through the technical services the WCA provided in areas such as: GIS mapping and analysis, public outreach, presentations, municipality policy and environmental document reviews and comment letters, project planning, project management, event services, graphic design, correspondence, and general administrative matters. Many of the benefits are further described in the tasks below.

Staff proposes that the WCA seek funding to continue this effort and expand it beyond the San Gabriel River with the inclusion of the Lower Los Angeles River and its tributaries.

Through the regional relationships and partnerships the WCA has fostered over the years, the continuation of the Watershed Program will further the watershed goals established in the comprehensive San Gabriel and Rio Hondo Watershed Management Plan, as well as the goals of the RMC and the vision of the WCA of “Connecting Communities through Nature”.

This program will greatly benefit the region by both supporting watershed protection and enhancement and spurring additional investments in the enhancement of urban creeks and watersheds. The program will further directly support several major regionally important Legislative Bills, planning efforts, and future funding opportunities, as represented by (see exhibit C: Regional Plans and Initiatives Map for more geographic details):

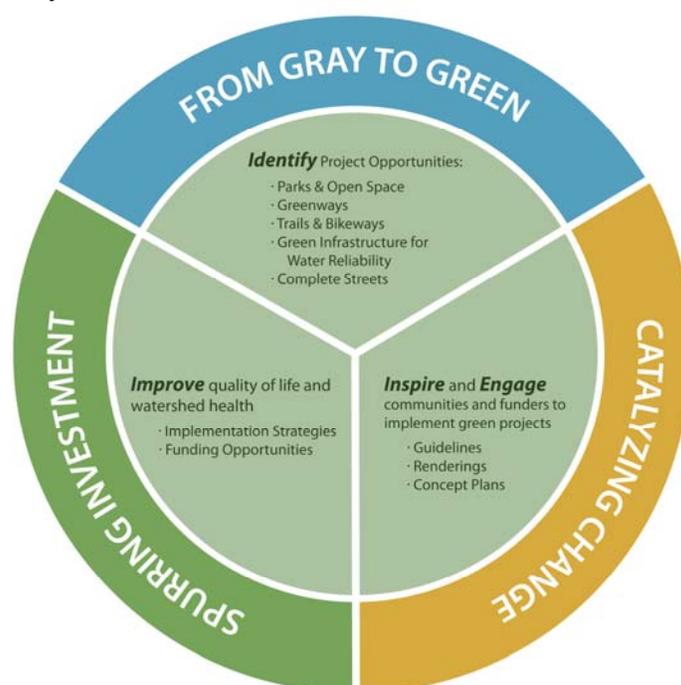
Legislative Bills	Agency	Goals
AB 530: Lower LA River Working Group	RMC, LAC Board of Supervisors (Solis)	Establishes a local working group tasked with updating the LA River Mater Plan to include a revitalization plan for the Lower LA River.
AB 1251: the Greenway Development and Sustainment Act	N/A	Provides mechanism for preserving greenways (similar to conservation easements) within 1/4 mile of the Rivers.
Plans & Initiatives		
Emerald Necklace Master Plan	WCA, LA County Board of Supervisors	17-mile loop of proposed and existing parks, greenways, bikeways, and multiuse trails. A series of projects will connect the the Rio Hondo and San Gabriel River in the heart of the San Gabriel Valley
Gateway Cities and Rivers Urban Greening Plan	WCA, North-East Trees	Urban Greening Plan for the Gateway Cities (GC) region, made up of 26 cities and unincorporated areas, will incorporate existing plans and public input, identify new and improved park, trail, bikeway, water conservation and capture, complete streets, tree cover, and interpretive and way-finding opportunities throughout urban communities in GC
LA River Integrated Design and Technical Analysis	LA River Revitalization Corportation's (LARRC)	Provides for a range of river interventions and capital improvements along entire 51-miles of the LA River.
I-710 Corridor Project study and 710 Liveability Initiative	CalTrans, Metro, Gateway Cities COG Transportation Committees, among others	The I-710 Corridor from East LA to Long Beach runs parallel to the Lower LA River. The 710 Livability Initiative, which includes strategies, programs, and policies that address I-710 adjacent community goals and objectives, to be included as part of Metro's Alternatives Evaluation in the I-710 Recirculated dEIR/EIS.
Gateway Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (Gateway IRWMP)	Gateway Cities COG	Provides integrated and collaborative effort to manage all aspects of water resources in the Gatway Cities region.
Greater Los Angeles County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (GLAC IRWMP) Lower San Gabriel and Los Angeles River Subregional plan	Gateway Cities COG, RMC	Describes subregion's physical setting, sources of water supply, water quality, environmental resources, planning objectives and targets, and partnership and multi-benefit opportunities.
Future Funding Opportunities		
Prop 1: Water Bond	RMC	Allocates \$100 million for the LA River, presenting communities the <u>opportunity to shape LA River Greenway development</u>
LA County Park Needs Assessment and Park Bond	LA County Parks and Recreation	Needs Aseessment will identify park needs county wide which will influence investment in public access, communities of diversity, and local park improvements through a future park bond
Cap n Trade	Federal/State	<u>Bringing Parks to People</u> : Investments in new park development near urban areas. <u>Green Infrastructure/Passive Park Development</u> : Tree plantings, native landscaping and non-motorized trail improvements within existing parks or proposed for new parks. <u>Hardscape Conversion</u> : Converting asphalt areas and blighted, energy inefficient, urban settings that otherwise induce heat island scenarios.
River Greenway District Initiative	WCA, LA County	Developing a working group/task force with County and others; will define greenway needs and establish metrics to meet needs. Will potentially lead to a county-wide ballot measure (similar to parks needs assessment process).

This Watershed GREEN Project for the San Gabriel River, Rio Hondo, and Lower LA River is both relevant and timely in support of the needs of the region and the growing focus at all levels of government—including at the State level—on watershed health and water conservation as exemplified in the above initiatives.

The Rivers are essential resources for the communities of Southern California, and we are at an important moment in history for developing the unique riparian opportunities and resources that our urban waterways have to offer. This has come as the result of decades of community activism and from successful non-profit governmental collaborations, manifesting in two vision plans for regional rivers: the LA River Master Plan and San Gabriel River Master Plan. In the past, however, the focus along the LA River's Upper Reaches, with many projects clustered around Glendale Narrows area, has overshadowed the needs of River Stakeholders living in other parts of the region. This imbalance can and should change given new attention being given to the Lower LA and San Gabriel Rivers.

The communities along the Lower LA River and portions of the San Gabriel River are notoriously disadvantaged, park-poor, and lack access to open space and environmental amenities. However, many of these communities are river-adjacent, and the preservation and revitalization of green spaces around the Rivers and other urban waterways have the potential to alleviate some of the negative public health outcomes, some of which are environmentally induced, by providing new open space and improved access to a variety of active and passive recreational facilities to promote healthy lifestyles. While several greenway amenities do exist along both the Lower LA River and San Gabriel River (e.g. Dominguez Gap Wetlands, Ralph C. Dills Park, Hollydale Park, Maywood Riverfront Park, El Dorado Regional Park, Wilderness Park, Santa Fe Springs Park, Pio Pico State Park, and a few others), significant work must be done to comprehensively close the extensive gaps and inequalities of greenway amenities along the Rivers. By approaching the rivers as regionally important community assets for active and passive recreation, non-motorized transportation, water quality and security, natural systems functions, and habitat, the project will seek to address solutions through a collaborative regional set of tools and proposed greenway policies and initiatives.

WCA is well-positioned to fulfill this role for the RMC and WCA urban territory utilizing a 'Gray to Green' approach with this project (see below). There is great need for identifying and understanding region-wide greening opportunities for water capture and environmental enhancement, all of which could be coordinated under a Watershed GREEN Project.



The **Watershed Green Regional Environmental Enhancement Network (GREEN) Project** activities to be submitted to the RMC for grant funding consideration will include the following major program components:

1. Watershed Needs Priority Projects

- Catalogue regional and local data related to greening opportunities represented in the following plan types:
 - Water Management Plans (e.g. IRWMPs, WMP, EWMP and CIMP)
 - Active Transportation (e.g. Active Transportation Plans, Bike Master Plans, Equestrian Plans)
 - Passive Recreation, Open Space and Habitat (e.g. Greening Plans, Revitalizations Studies)
 - Community Initiatives (e.g. Livability Initiatives, Environmental Justice Elements)
 - Potential Greenway Development acquisitions (within ¼ mile of the River, e.g. Tax-default properties and vacant, under-utilized, or inaccessible public or private holdings)
- Undergo a data assessment of the population most impacted by greenway and greening development within the study area
- Conduct needs assessments, develop related plans, projects, and programs for water and open space opportunities
- Identify up to 5 priority project opportunities and/or planning area gaps within San Gabriel and/or Rio Hondo/Lower Los Angeles River Watersheds to further goals of open space, connectivity, habitat and/or water quality, water conservation, or flood protection

2. River Trail Inventory Development and Integration

- Perform Bike Counts in strategic locations along the major River Trails in the region, filling a gap in currently available data, providing a baseline of mobility volumes and behavior of use patterns along major River corridors; also making it possible to evaluate the effectiveness of programs to promote active mobility and ability to inform prioritization of River Trail improvement projects.
 - To coordinate our efforts with Metro and LA County Department of Public Works (Bikeway Division) in the development of 25 Bike First Aid Stations (construction phase beginning 2021) which will incorporate 16 camera counters, and facilitate with their public outreach (workshops) and preliminary design of Stations and selection of amenities with the community.
- Engage targeted key stakeholders and constituencies through River Trail guided tours and corresponding experiential surveys to better understand the type of improvements local communities would like to see and where they would like to see them.
- Develop community wayfinding communication strategies—both directions and referrals—for distinctive corridors and regions—utilizing scenario rating, visual preference, and image rating survey tools.
- Develop standardized multi-use trail auditing processes, through partnerships with local trail experts, to understand reality of multi-use trail accessibility, e.g. for equestrians, especially along historical multi-use trail routes.

3. Stakeholder Participation and Stewardship Building:

- Attend and participate in regional and local water, open space, and active transportation related programs working groups, community and agency initiatives and project development aimed at resource conservation, protection, and enhancing access to public open space, particularly along our waterways and within the National Monument in cooperation with US Forest Service.

- Engage and coordinate planning and outreach efforts with regional planning organizations and districts across jurisdictional boundaries. Stakeholders for this project should include representatives from:
 - San Gabriel Valley, Gateway Cities, and Orange County Councils of Governments (CoGs), including specialized committees such as the Transportation Committee, I-710 Corridor Committee, and 710 Livability Initiative, and other regional planners such as Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), among others.
 - Gateway Water Management Authority (GWMA) and other local water resource planning agencies, such as LA County Flood and the Metropolitan Water District.
 - Environmental Planning Agencies, Conservancies, and Landscape Architects such as Friends of the Colorado Lagoon, Southern California Coastal Water Research Project, Tidal Influence, and Mia Lehrer.
 - Community non-profits and local initiatives, such as the East Yards Communities for Environmental Justice (EYCEJ), LA County Bike Coalition, Trails4All, Heal the Bay, Friends of the LA River, Amigos de los Rios, and Campfire.
 - Government agencies and utilities, such as Metro (rail) and Southern California Edison.
 - Local, college-level institutions specializing in environmental planning and/or community-based participatory planning, such as Cal Poly Pomona, CSU Long Beach, and UCLA Luskin Center.
 - Elected officials, residents, and community leaders from each of the participating cities and unincorporated areas within the planning boundaries.
- Develop a framework to establish a Watershed Conservation Stewardship Program to disseminate information to improve land management and develop conservation projects.
- Expand on *California Greenway Development and Sustainment Act of 2015 (AB 1251)* by promoting greenway development (within 1/4 mile of Rivers) through the establishment of 'River Districts' to catalyze greenway development and natural systems functions, ensuring they will be expanded, maintained, and protected in perpetuity through public and private partnership building—if possible.

4. Community Engagement Strategies Analysis

- Undertake a landscape analysis of the types of engagement strategies that have and have not worked with greening projects locally and nationally
- Engage institutions which are coordinating community-participatory planning in the region, such as Cal Poly Pomona and UCLA, and develop an "Initial Findings Report" with lessons learned from their engagement tactics, refined audience personas for specific communities (disadvantaged, park-poor communities) and metrics identified to track progress towards desired outcomes in those areas
- Engage targeted key stakeholders and constituencies through possible efforts such as online public opinion surveys, in-person interviews, one-on-one meetings, workshops, and focus groups (multi-lingual approach required), in order to provide a baseline on where communities stand on Watershed Conservation Stewardship Programs overall, how they would like to be engaged in the process, what mediums they find most useful, what messengers they trust, and how they would like to participate in various civic engagement tactics throughout the development of the Program.

- Outreach campaigns utilizing online survey tools will be supported with mobile kiosks at key demographic centers in the region to allow access to those without ready access to the internet.
- Report on innovative developments and improvements in the Green Infrastructure and/or Watershed Management Program and publish a quarterly Watershed Blog/Electronic Newsletter hosted on WCA and/or partner Agency website(s).

5. Establish Framework for Regional Watershed Open Database System

- Participate in the development, establishment and potential data management/coordination of a Watershed GREEN (Green Regional Environmental Enhancement Network) Open Database System (includes funding the third-party software and hosting of the public transparency site that would include both mapping and dashboard/performance measurement functionality)
 - Development of goals and performance metrics with stakeholders for greenway development
 - Development of performance dashboard and data narrative elements and formatting tools, providing for better engagement through the dissemination of regional and local data through a more human-centric perspective, utilizing data narratives and community snapshots
 - Operate and maintain an Open Data/Open Performance Dashboard Platform site for 2 years
 - Develop protocols for streamlining the process of integrating new projects into the online engagement/development process across jurisdictions
- Develop protocol for updating data and sharing information on the Database System long-term with regional planning organizations and/or districts

6. Coordination of Project Implementation Consistent with Master Plans

- Support LA County Board of Supervisors staff/Emerald Necklace Coordination Committee in providing coordination support for the implementation of Emerald Necklace Master Plan, includes meeting facilitation, researching project funding opportunities and overall tracking of program implementation progress
- Support California Department of Natural Resources consistent with AB 530 which establishes the Lower Los Angeles River Working for administration, coordination and implementation of projects within the scope of the working group and complimentary to the working.

FISCAL INFORMATION: The request for funding from RMC would provide Watershed Green Regional Environmental Enhancement Network (GREEN) Project support for up to 5 years for a total amount not to exceed \$650,000. See Exhibit A and B - Budget and Schedule, for details.

San Gabriel River and Lower LA River Watershed GREEN Project

BUDGET

WCA Proposal	RMC Prop 84 Grant	Local Match SGC Prop 84	Complimentary Work by Others
0.00 Project Management	\$ 85,000	\$ 50,000	\$ -
0.01 Project Initiation			
0.02 Project Administration and Contract Procurement			
0.03 Project Management, Reporting, Grant Admin, and Close-Out			
1.00 Watershed Needs Priority Projects	\$ 30,000	\$ 24,000	\$ -
Gather and Review Existing Documents (such as Plans related to Water Management, Active Transportation, Parks and Open Space, Community Initiatives, and potential acquisitions, among others)			
1.01			
1.02 Undergo a data assessment of River-adjacent communities			
1.02 Existing Conditions Technical Memorandum (deliverable)			
1.03 Identify priority project opportunities			
2.00 River Trail Inventory Development and Integration	\$ 120,909	\$ 20,000	\$ 152,333
2.01 Perform Bike Counts			\$ 112,333
2.02 Coordinate Bike First Aid Station Development (and workshops)			\$ 40,000
2.03 River Trail Guided Tour and Experiential River Trail Surveys			
2.04 Develop Community Way-finding Communication Strategy			
2.05 Multi-Use Trail Accessibility Audit			
3.00 Stakeholder Participation and Stewardship Building	\$ 85,000	\$ 25,000	\$ -
Stakeholder Outreach (to Agencies including CoGs, Transportation Committees, Caltrans/Metro, Water Management Authorities, Environmental Planning Agencies and Advocacy Groups, Community Non-profits, Government Agencies, and Community Leaders, among others)			
3.01 PDT Meetings (GCCOG Transportation Committees, Metro, LLAR Impacted Cities, RMC)			
3.02 Develop framework to establish a Watershed Conservation Stewardship Program to disseminate information to the region			
3.03 Promote River Greenway Development through the potential establishment of 'River Districts' for region's major urban waterways			
3.04			
4.00 Community Engagement Strategies Analysis	\$ 80,000	\$ 35,000	\$ 105,000
Undertake landscape analysis of civic engagement strategies that have and have not worked with greening projects locally and nationally			
4.01			
4.02 Cal Poly Pomona: Community-based participatory planning along Lower LA River			\$ 40,000
4.03 UCLA Luskin Center: Development of Lower LA River Greenway Toolkit			\$ 65,000
Engage targeted key stakeholders and constituencies utilizing civic engagement tools (in-person and online); strategic outreach campaigns utilizing high-end, graphic online survey tools and mobile kiosks			
4.04			
4.05 Report on innovative developments, publishing a quarterly blog, newsletter, and/or website/social media posts			
5.00 Lower LA River Greenway Development Tool	\$ 165,000	\$ 15,000	\$ -
Development of Greenway Tool, Format Data for Tool, Development of Performance Dashboard and Data Narrative Elements			
5.01			
5.02 Open Data/Open Performance Platform (subscription for 2 years)	\$ 100,000		
5.03 Develop Protocol for Updating Data and sharing Information on Tool Long-Term			
6.00 Coordination of Project Implementation Consistant with Master Plans	\$ 25,000	\$ 5,000	\$ -
Support LA County Board of Supervisors staff/Emerald Necklace Coordination Committee for implementation support of Emerald Necklace Master Plan			
6.01			
Support California Natural Resources consistent with AB 530, establishing Lower LA River Working Group			
6.02			
7.00 Contingency (10%)	\$ 59,091	\$ -	\$ -
Total:	\$ 650,000	\$ 174,000	\$ 257,333
Grant + Matching:	\$ 824,000		
Grant + Matching + Complimentary Funding:	\$ 1,081,333		

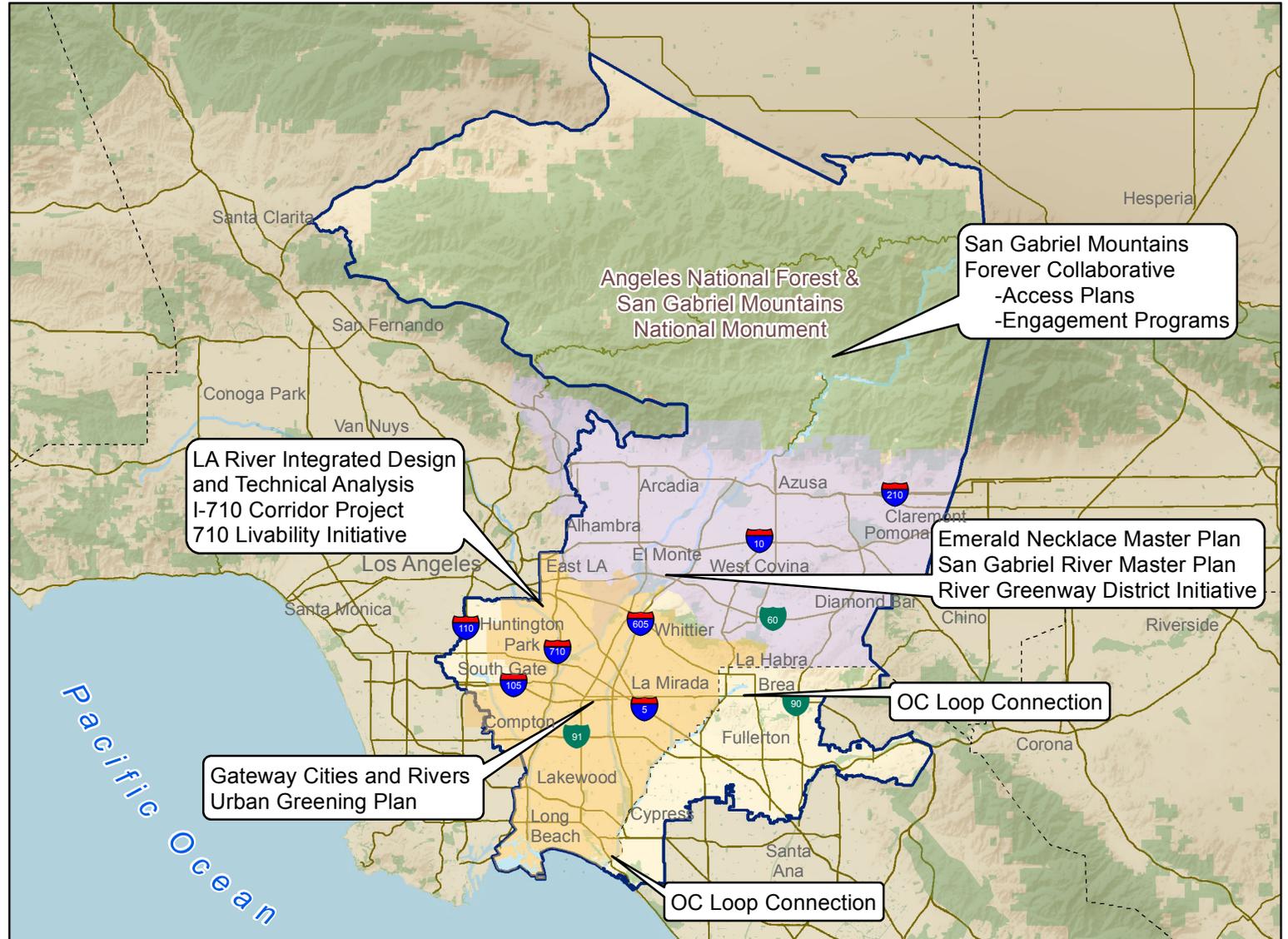
San Gabriel River and Lower LA River Watersheds GREEN Project																				
SCHEDULE																				
WCA Proposal	2016				2017				2018				2019				2020			
	1st QT	2nd QT	3rd QT	4th QT	1st QT	2nd QT	3rd QT	4th QT	1st QT	2nd QT	3rd QT	4th QT	1st QT	2nd QT	3rd QT	4th QT	1st QT	2nd QT	3rd QT	4th QT
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6.01 Support LA County Board of Supervisors staff/Emerald Necklace Coordination Committee for implementation support of Emerald Necklace Master Plan																				
6.02 Support California Natural Resources consistent with AB 530 establishing Lower LA River Working Group																				



San Gabriel River and Lower LA River Watersheds GREEN Project

RMC / WCA Territory

Exhibit C: Regional Plans and Initiatives



- Legend**
- RMC / WCA Territory
 - GatewayCities_COG_Communities
 - SGVCOG_Boundary
 - Protected Open Space
 - County Boundary
 - Freeways
 - Rivers and Water Bodies



January 21, 2016 - Item 16

RESOLUTION 2016-10

RESOLUTION OF THE WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TO AUTHORIZE THE CHAIR, OR DESIGNEE, THE DISCRETION TO AUTHORIZE A GRANT APPLICATION FOR THE SAN GABRIEL AND LOWER LOS ANGELES RIVERS WATERSHED GREEN REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT NETWORK (GREEN) PROJECT

WHEREAS, the Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA) has been established as a joint powers agency between the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy and the Los Angeles County Flood Control District; and

WHEREAS, the Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA) has further been established to focus on projects which will provide open space, habitat restoration, and watershed improvement projects in both the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers watershed; and

WHEREAS, this action authorizes the Chair, or designee, the discretion to authorize a grant application for the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers Watershed Green Regional Environmental Enhancement Network (GREEN) Project; and

WHEREAS, the proposed action is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); NOW

Therefore be it resolved that the WCA hereby:

1. **FINDS** that this action is consistent with the purposes and objectives of the WCA.
2. **FINDS** that the actions contemplated by this resolution are exempt from the environmental impact report requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
3. **ADOPTS** the staff report dated January 21, 2016.
4. **AUTHORIZES** the Chair, or designee, the discretion to award a contract in an amount not to exceed \$650,000 for geotechnical consulting services for the River Wilderness Park Entry Improvements Project.

~ End of Resolution ~

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Motion: _____ Second: _____

Ayes: _____ Nays: _____ Abstentions: _____

Passed and Adopted by the Board of the
WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
On January 21, 2016

Brian Mejia, Chairperson

ATTEST: _____
Terry Fujimoto
Deputy Attorney General