

DATE: September 17, 2020

TO: Watershed Conservation Authority Governing Board

FROM: WCA Staff

THROUGH: Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Item 07: Liaison and Activities Report

Legislative Update

For full text and history of bills and initiatives, visit these web sites:

Federal Bills: <https://www.congress.gov>

State Bills: <http://www.leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/>

Current as of 09/01/2020

The following is the status of legislative bills that have been introduced in the current session by Senate and Assembly potentially of interest to the RMC and its respective Joint Powers Authorities. Bills can be tracked on the legislative website: <http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/>

PARKS AND WATER

AB 209 (Limón D) Parks: Outdoor Environmental Education: Grant Program

Introduced: 1/14/2019, **Last Amended Date:** 8/13/2019, **Status:** Chaptered

Summary: This bill is a reintroduction of last year's AB 2534. As a reminder, this bill would require the Director of Parks and Recreation to establish the Outdoor Equity Grants Program to increase the ability of underserved and at-risk populations to participate in outdoor environmental educational experiences at state parks and other public lands where outdoor environmental education programs take place. The bill would require the director to, among other things, give priority for funding to outdoor environmental education programs that primarily provide outreach to and serve pupils who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, foster youth, or pupils of limited English proficiency. To the extent that the skill sets of persons retained through the River Rangers Program include interpretative/naturalist aptitudes, the program envisioned in this bill may underwrite these positions.

The Governor's January Budget proposed \$20 million to underwrite the development and implementation of the provisions captured in this bill. However, given the state of economic affairs in California, this appropriation was struck in the May Revise.

SB 367 (Hueso D) State Coastal Conservancy: Grants: Educational Projects and Programs**Introduced: 2/20/2019, Last Amended Date: 6/13/2019, Status: Chaptered**

Summary: Existing law authorizes the State Coastal Conservancy to fund and undertake plans and feasibility studies and to award grants to public agencies and nonprofits for these purposes. This bill would additionally authorize the conservancy to provide technical assistance, and award grants for that purpose. This bill would authorize the conservancy to undertake educational projects and programs for adults and for pupils in kindergarten to grade 12 and to award grants to nonprofits, educational institutions, public agencies, etc. for educational projects and programs related to the preservation, protection, enhancement, maintenance, enjoyment of coastal resources and for onsite and distance learning facilities, activities, and instruction programs that support the delivery of science, history and social science. Would authorize conservancy to award grants for the construction and improvement of structures and facilities used for those projects and programs.

AB 1659 (Bloom D) Large Electrical Corporations: Wildfire Mitigation: Securitization**Introduced: 2/22/2019, Last Amended Date: 8/28/2020, Status: Dead**

Summary: Would enact the Wildfire Prevention and Community Resilience Act of 2020 and would require the Natural Resources Agency, in consultation with the Public Utilities Commission, to adopt an interim expenditure plan and an expenditure plan that are focused on reducing wildfire risk on the ground and in communities through activities such as defensible space implementation, home hardening, improved public safety, including expenditures to add trained emergency medical technicians to the workforce, and other authorized activities, as well as to prepare residents for wildfires through public education and outreach, as provided. The bill would establish the Wildfire Prevention and Community Resilience Fund and, upon appropriation by the Legislature, would require moneys in the fund be used for the implementation of those plans.

The language in the last iteration of this bill reflects an eleventh hour effort to move the “fire related pieces” contained in AB 3256 out of the Legislature and onto the Governor’s desk. Had this effort not stalled, RMC was eligible for funding for fire prevention, mitigation and restoration work through \$300 million program earmarked for the state conservancies.

AB 2103 (O’Donnell D) San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy: Territory: Dominguez Channel Watershed and Santa Catalina Island**Introduced: 2/6/2020, Status: Dead**

Summary: Current law establishes the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy in the Natural Resources Agency and prescribes the functions and duties of the conservancy with regard to the protection, preservation, and enhancement of specified areas of the Counties of Los Angeles and Orange located along the San Gabriel River and the lower Los Angeles River and tributaries along those rivers. Current law, for purposes of those provisions, defines “territory” to mean the territory of the conservancy that consists of those portions of the Counties of Los Angeles and Orange located within the San Gabriel River and its tributaries, the lower Los Angeles River and its tributaries, and the San Gabriel Mountains, as described. This bill would additionally include the Dominguez Channel watershed and Santa Catalina Island, as described, within that definition of territory, and would make various related

changes to the boundaries of that territory. This bill represents a repeat attempt at expanding the boundaries of the RMC. Last year's AB 1694 stalled in the Senate Appropriations Committee and the author has made a concerted effort to partner with legislative colleagues in the joint authoring of this measure. Given the shift in focus and priority of the Legislature in light of recent events, authors were encourage to downsize bill portfolios. This bill was among the many casualties subject to leadership directives.

AB 2519 (Wood D) Conservation Projects: Grants: Advance Payments

Introduced: 2/19/2020, **Last Amended Date:** 06/04/2020, **Status:** Dead

Summary: Current law requires the Natural Resources Agency, the State Coastal Conservancy, the Department of Water Resources, and the State Water Resources Control Board to administer various grant programs relating to natural resources. This bill would require, to the extent not in conflict with any other law, the Natural Resources Agency, the conservancy, the department, and the board, when awarding grants for conservation projects, as defined, to provide an advance payment of up to 25% of the total grant award if requested by a grant recipient.

AB 3030 (Kalra A): Resource conservation: land and ocean conservation goals

Introduced: 2/13/2020, **Last Amended Date:** 8/13/2020, **Status:** Dead

Summary: Existing law declares it to be the policy of the state that the protection and management of natural and working lands, as defined, is an important strategy in meeting the state's greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals, and requires all state agencies, departments, boards, and commissions to consider this policy when revising, adopting, or establishing policies, regulations, expenditures, or grant criteria relating to the protection and management of natural and working lands.

This bill would declare it to be the goals of the state by 2030 to protect at least 30% of the state's land areas and waters; to help advance the protection of 30% of the nation's oceans; and to support regional, national, and international efforts to protect at least 30% of the world's land areas and waters and 30% of the world's ocean. The bill would declare it a further goal of the state to improve access to nature for all people in the state and to provide for recreational and educational opportunities, including wildlife-dependent recreational activities, with a specific emphasis on increasing access for communities of color and economically disadvantaged communities.

The bill would authorize the state to achieve these goals through specified activities. The bill would require the Natural Resources Agency to ensure that actions made in furtherance of these goals are conducted in a specified manner.

SB 474 (Stern D) Very high fire hazard severity zone: state responsibility area: development prohibition

Introduced: 2/21/2019, **Last Amended Date:** 6/19/2020, **Status:** Dead

Summary: Formerly titled the California Wildfire Protection Act of 1990: Habitat Conservation Fund, this bill would establish the Wildlife Protection Subaccount in the Habitat Conservation Fund and would require the Controller, if an appropriation is made for this purpose in any fiscal year, to transfer \$30,000,000 from the General Fund to the subaccount, less any amount transferred from specified

accounts and funds, to be expended by the board for the acquisition, enhancement, or restoration of wildlife habitat.

SB 886 (Archuleta D) Lower San Gabriel River Recreation and Park District: Establishment: Board of Directors

Introduced: 1/23/2020, **Last Amended Date:** 5/18/2020, **Status:** Dead

Summary: Current law authorizes the establishment of the Lower San Gabriel River Recreation and Park District by petition or resolution submitted to the Los Angeles County Local Agency Formation Commission before January 1, 2020. Current law authorizes specified city councils, including the city council of the City of Montebello, and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to appoint members to serve on the initial board of directors of the district. Under existing law, a violation of any rule, regulation, or ordinance adopted by the board of directors of a recreation and park district is a crime. This bill would extend the deadline to submit the petition or resolution establishing the district from January 1, 2020, to January 1, 2023.

SJR 14 (Archuleta D) Whittier Narrows Dam: Flood Protection Improvements: Federal Funding

Introduced: 2/26/2020, **Status:** Dead – passed by Senate, not Assembly

Summary: This measure would urge the United States Congress to include and approve in its 2021 budget an appropriation of approximately \$385,000,000 to the United States of Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works program to perform the critically needed construction and repair work on Whittier Narrows Dam to protect the citizens of southeastern Los Angeles County from catastrophic flooding.

According to the author's office, even though the resolution died, the funding it was requesting from the federal government for the Whittier Narrows Dam was secured so the bill was technically no longer needed.

CLIMATE CHANGE

AB 293 (Garcia, Eduardo D) Greenhouse Gases: Offset Protocols

Introduced: 1/28/2019, **Last Amended Date:** 4/2/2019, **Status:** Chaptered

Summary: Current law, until January 1, 2031, establishes the Compliance Offsets Protocol Task Force to provide guidance to the CA Air Resources Board in approving new offset protocols for a market-based compliance mechanism for the purposes of increasing offset projects with direct environmental benefits in the state while prioritizing disadvantaged communities, Native American or tribal lands, and rural and agricultural regions. This bill would require the task force to consider the development of additional offset protocols, including, but not limited to, protocols for the enhanced management or conservation of agricultural and natural lands, and for the enhancement and restoration of wetlands.

AB 2619 (Stone D) Coastal Resources: Program for Climate Resilience, Adaptation, and Access

Introduced: 2/20/2020, **Status:** Dead

Summary: Would establish the Program for Coastal Resilience, Adaptation, and Access for the purpose of funding specified activities intended to help the state prepare, plan, and implement actions to address and adapt to sea level rise and coastal climate change. The bill would create the Coastal Resilience, Adaptation, and Access Fund in the State Treasury, and would authorize the California Coastal Commission and specified state agencies to expend moneys in the fund, upon appropriation in the annual Budget Act, to take actions, based upon the best scientific information, that are designed to address and adapt to sea level rise and coastal climate change, as prescribed.

AB 3256 (Garcia, Eduardo D) Economic Recovery, Wildfire Prevention, Safe Drinking Water, Drought Preparation, and Flood Protection Bond Act of 2020

Introduced: 2/21/2020, **Last Amended Date:** 6/4/2020, **Status:** Dead

Summary: Would enact the Economic Recovery, Wildfire Prevention, Safe Drinking Water, Drought Preparation, and Flood Protection Bond Act of 2020, which, if approved by the voters, would authorize the issuance of bonds in the amount of \$6,980,000,000 pursuant to the State General Obligation Bond Law to finance projects for an economic recovery, wildfire prevention, safe drinking water, drought preparation, and flood protection program.

If successful, the RMC would have been eligible to compete for funding for climate-related projects and programs through a \$500 million pot created for state conservancies. The last uncirculated version of the bill also contained a \$25 million call-out for the RMC.

SB 45 (Allen D) Wildfire Prevention, Safe Drinking Water, Drought Prevention, and Flood Protection Bond Act of 2020

Introduced: 12/3/2018, **Last Amended Date:** 1/23/2020, **Status:** Dead

Summary: Would enact the Wildfire Prevention, Safe Drinking Water, Drought Preparation, and Flood Protection Bond Act of 2020, which, if approved by the voters, would authorize the issuance of bonds in the amount of \$5,510,000,000 pursuant to the State General Obligation Bond Law to finance projects for a wildfire prevention, safe drinking water, drought preparation, and flood protection program. Would also restore fire damaged areas, reduce wildfire risk, create healthy forest and watersheds, reduce climate impacts on urban areas and vulnerable populations, protect water supply and water quality, protect rivers, lakes, and streams, reduce flood risk, protect fish and wildlife from climate impacts, improve climate resilience of agricultural lands, and protect coastal lands and resources. There is a specific category contained in the bond that is LA River specific. This is the Senate climate/resources bond vehicle that will serve as a compliment to AB 3256. This bill would provide for the submission of these provisions to the voters at the November 3, 2020, statewide general election. The last iteration of this bill had over \$100 million identified for the RMC

FEDERAL

Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA)

Signed: August 4, 2020

Summary: Fully and permanently funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and providing \$9.5 billion in funding to address a maintenance backlog at American national parks

There has not been a single year since the creation and enactment of the Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) back in 1965 where the account was fully funded to its authorized amount of \$900 million. Funded through off-shore oil lease revenues and royalties, the LWCF is the only program at the federal level that provides for annual funding for park and conservation improvements in the US. Through the enactment of the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA), the LWCF will be fully funded in perpetuity. The allocation or distribution formula associated with the LWCF is generally on a per capita basis or the percentage of a state's population compared to the rest of the nation.

As the most populous state, California has always received the lion's share of available funds. The bulk of the allocated funds are typically routed through the California Department of Parks and Recreation both for state park unit improvements and for sub-allocations on a competitive basis to local agencies for park and greenspace improvements. Conservancies such as the RMC are not eligible for allocations or awards. However, in addition to cities, counties and park-specific providing special districts, Joint Power Authorities (JPA's) such as the WCA can compete for local dollars. It is difficult to predict the amount of funds that will be available on an annual basis for local grants but it is estimated that it will exceed \$25 million. Importantly, grantees must provide a 50% match or greater to compete.

In addition to the full funding of the LWCF, The Great American Outdoors Act provided for more than \$9 billion in one time funding for conservation, access and user amenity improvements on federal lands such as the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument. It has been sited that there is a backlog of deferred maintenance on these lands exceeding \$10 billion and this investment will go far to address this need. California is experiencing record numbers in state, local and federal land visitations due in large part to the outset of Covid-19 and the enactment of (GAOA) could not be more timely.

PROJECTS OF SIGNIFICANT INTEREST

San Gabriel Mountains National Monument: At the July meeting of the San Gabriel Mountains Community Collaborative, Adrienne Dunfee, Deputy Monument Manager of the Angeles National Forest (ANF), gave an update. Matthew Bokach, Monument Manager, is on temporary assignment focused on COVID-19 Response. Recreation areas across the Angeles National Forest continue to experience exceptionally high numbers of visitors making 2020 already the busiest in its 112-year history. COVID-19 has generated lots of challenges for managing recreation and facility operations have been reduced due to limited staff and lack of proper PPE. The Forest Service has suspended all volunteer activities due to COVID-19 as a safety precaution. In addition, USFS in response to unprecedented and dangerous fire conditions within the region, a combination of extreme heat, dry conditions, significant wind events, and firefighting resources that are stretched to the limit, has announced temporary closures and fire restrictions to provide for public safety and reduce the potential for human caused fire starts.

The Angeles National Forest has already experienced a number of large fires this season, including the Dam (220 acres), Ranch2 (4,237 acres) and Lake Fires (31,089 Acres). The Bobcat Fire (4,871 acres) is currently burning on the Angeles (West fork of the San Gabriel River in the Monument), north of Azusa, with 0% containment as of September 9. The 2020 Fire Season got off to a fast start and is shaping up to be one of the most active in recent memory. The Fire Danger Level on the Angeles National Forest remains at “Extreme”.



Ranch2 wildfire view from WCA's River Wilderness Park. Photo by MRCA Ranger.

San Gabriel Mountains Community Collaborative: On July 23, 2020, the SGMCC held a virtual meeting via Zoom. Angeles National Forest and Collaborative members conducted a partnership workshop focused on sharing best practices for building partnerships with the Forest Service. Fabian Garcia (Angeles National Forest) presented an overview of approval and decision-making process in the Forest Service. Fabian will be going on a 120 Day Detail as a National Partnership Coordinator to help align the Forest Service to work with partners. Joseph Gonzalez (RMC) gave an overview of the EIR/EIS for the San Gabriel River Confluence with Cattle Canyon Improvements Project. Steven Messner (CORBA) shared a case study of the Strawberry Peak Trail Restoration Project. Belinda Faustinos (Nature For All) presented on partnership agreements. Break-out sessions among committees focused on partnering strategies.

The next SGMCC meeting will be Thursday, September 24th, 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: New trails are being formed around and through the northern dry streambed, footbridge footings are being prepared and seating areas placed. Southern bioswale/wetlands are being dug and prepared for filter fabric, boulders, cobble and sand. The fabrication of the shade structures are being readied for installation. Colors are being confirmed for site furnishings and metal work prior to final painting and delivery. Landscaping and weed control continue as the soil is prepared for additional plants and mulch to come. Conservation Corps of Los Angeles and County of Orange are preparing to start their work of installing thousands of 4" native plants along the pathways. Submittals continue to be processed and RFI's answered. Construction team meetings resumed in August and will continue until the end of the project later this year. WCA's Construction Manager is working with the General Contractor, Fast-Track Construction, on finalizing change orders for new and deleted work. Project completion is anticipated by the end of the calendar year.



Riparian Dry Streambed, trails, and footbridge footings taking shape as the project nears completion.



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.

San Gabriel River Center and Gardens Project: Following consultation with Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation, WCA Staff conducted an internal design charrette to envision the San Gabriel River Center as indoor / outdoor space, with direct integration of the planned water conservation gardens. Staff has prepared a request for an Environmental Testing firm, to test the farm house for hazardous materials, in preparation for future partial demolition of a portion of the house structure and attached garage. Staff is also engaging Positive Plumbing to evaluate the existing septic system, in preparation for potential refurbishment / expansion. Following the results of these evaluations, Staff will prepare an RFP for a demolition contract, which will be brought before the Watershed Conservation Authority Board for approval.

WCA continues to move 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.

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 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: The next meeting of the Emerald Necklace Committee scheduled for July 14 was cancelled and has not yet been rescheduled. This 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 water ways, the San Gabriel River and the Rio Hondo. Phase I's 16 projects will close gaps in this regional recreational trail 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 plan is to create a multi-use trail along the Westside Multi-Use Trail from State Highway 60 to the Gateway Community Center with Gates, Signage, etc.

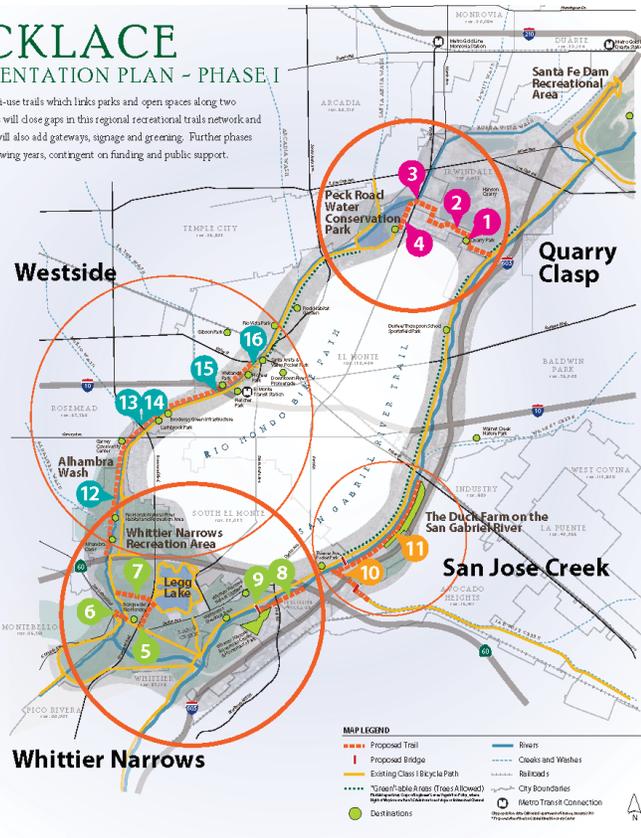
- 12 Multi-Use Trail: Alhambra Wash from State Highway 60 to the Gateway Community Center with Gates, Signage, etc.
- 13 Underpass at Rosemead Blvd.
- 14 Street Access Ramps at Rosemead Blvd. with Gates & Signage
- 15 10 Freeway Underpass Improvements
- 16 Multi-Use Trail: Rosemead Blvd. to Valley Blvd.

Whittier Narrows Connectivity: Linking Existing Park Resources

This section of the plan focuses on the southern section of the Whittier Narrows Multi-Use Trail. It includes projects to improve connectivity between existing park resources and to create new trail segments.

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

PROJECT COMPONENTS



Quarry Clasp: Completing the Loop

Multi-Use Trail: From Peck Road Water Conservation Park to the San Gabriel River with Gates, Signage and Wayfinding

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

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

This section of the plan focuses on the northern section of the San Jose Creek Multi-Use Trail. It includes projects to improve connectivity between existing park resources and to create new trail segments.

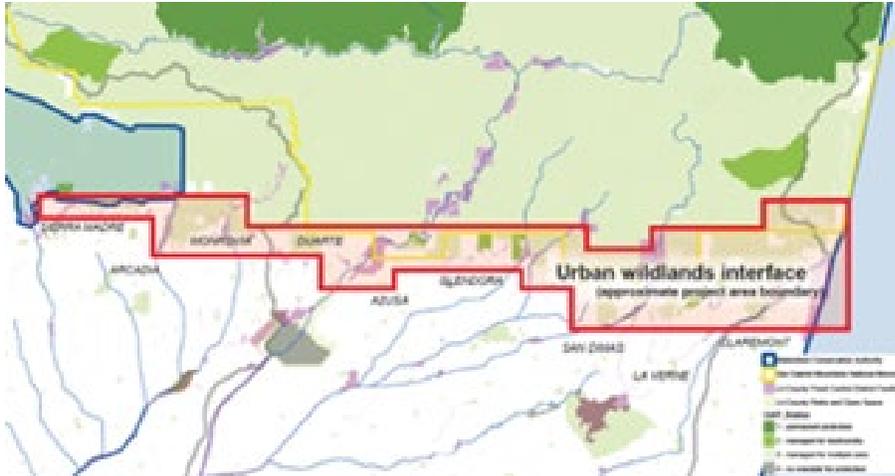
- 10 Multi-Use Trail and 2 Class I Bicycle Bridges: From San Jose Creek Trail to San Gabriel River Trail
- 11 Multi-Use Trail: From San Jose Creek to the Duck Farm on the San Gabriel River



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 continues work on the Report on Regional Biological Opportunities. A presentation of work in progress was shared with some key stakeholders, and feedback is being used to shape content. WCA has been compiling content for the plan. An RFP will be issued to engage additional consultants to refine specific topics for the completed Plan.



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: Botanical field surveys of Vasquez Overlook (Vasquez II) have concluded. WCA is awaiting a draft report of the results.

As part of due diligence, 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 unpaved road before WCA acquires the property. Such agreement is expected to require approvals from the Azusa City Council and the County Board. WCA has been discussing such a document with City of Azusa. Legal counsel is drafting language to be considered for approval by the City of Azusa.

Consideration of a contract for survey is on the consent calendar. A survey and legal description are necessary in order to draft a purchase contract.

Phase I Environmental Site Assessment will be taking place.

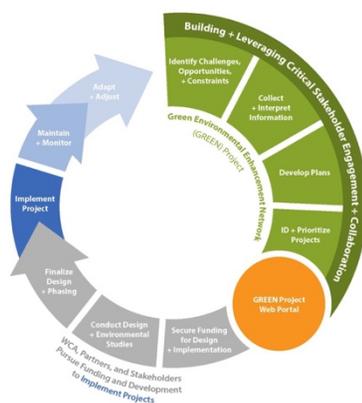
Environmental writer, Ilsa Setziol, began a series of interviews that will form the basis of a short article on the Vasquez land and its history. Interviews so far have included Art Vasquez Senior and Jeffrey Cornejo, author of *Azusa, Images of America*, by Arcadia Publishing. The article will provide source material for future blog posts, social media, press releases and interpretive content. More importantly, it will provide an additional perspective to articulate the contemporary context of conservation in the foothills.



The Vasquez acquisitions (Vasquez I in 2016 and Vasquez II in 2020) protect some of the last undeveloped private holdings along the foothills 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. Staff continues to engage in efforts including the Watershed Area Steering Committees (WASC), and advancement of proof-of-concept for the GREEN Portal through specific improvements for the Gateway Greening Plan intended for incorporation. A request for proposals for technical assistance in development of the GREEN Portal is also planned this quarter for Board review in November. At the site scale a contract for Duck Farm Equestrian Center design services including conceptual plan and construction drawing development has been awarded to Blue Green Consulting which received the highest scores among proposers.

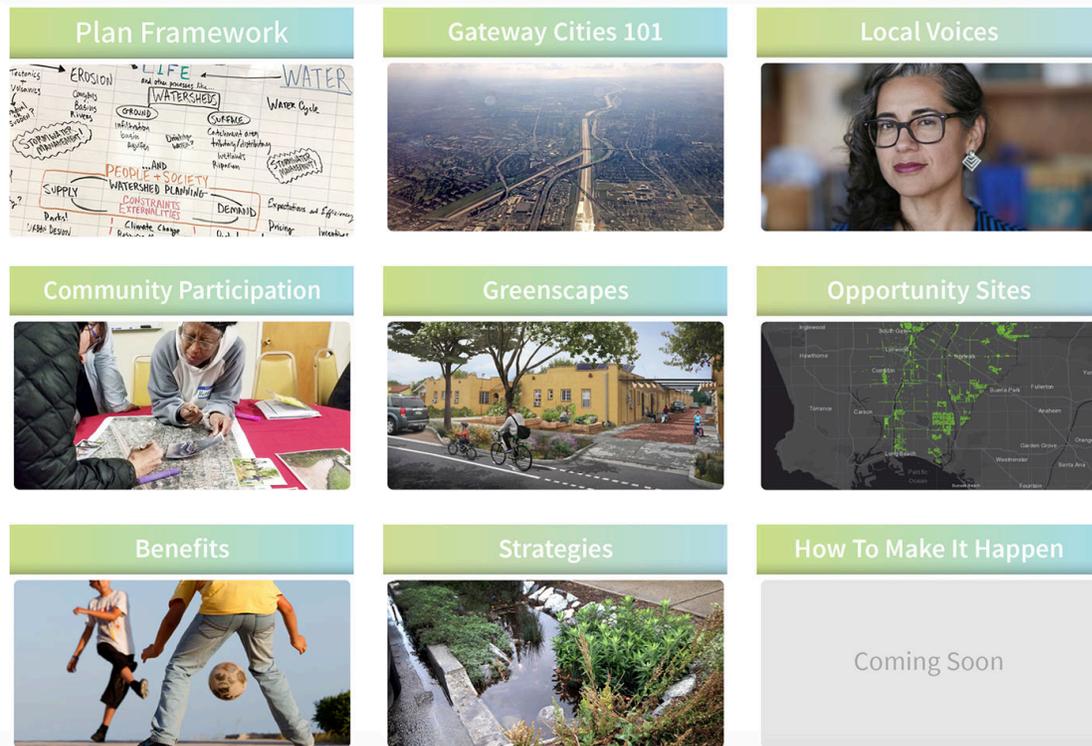
The Green Regional Environmental Enhancement Network (GREEN) Project is a planning and project implementation initiative supporting watershed-based greening efforts to help support collaboration in the wider Los Angeles and Orange County area.



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: In August, WCA staff presented the Plan and website to RMC staff for feedback. WCA will re-engage with other stakeholders over the coming months prior to launch for additional buy-in.



Navigation buttons from the Gateway Cities and Rivers Urban Greening Vision Plan homepage

With a grant from the Strategic Growth Council, the RMC, 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 is compiling a list of entities to reach out to for the outreach component of WCA’s scope.

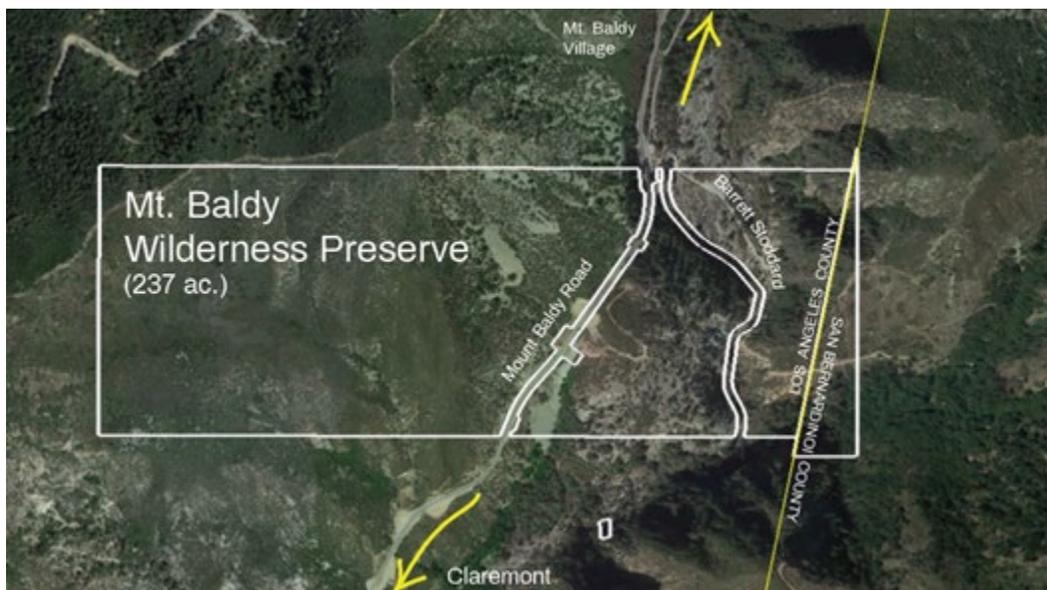
The purpose of the Supplemental Analysis is to supplement the State Water Board funded Los Angeles River Environmental Flows Study to include a more robust analysis of the potential impacts to recreation, wildlife habitat, and water quality in the Lower Los Angeles River from reduced instream water flows 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: WCA is exploring a partnership with Inland Empire Resources Conservation District (IERCD) to manage and eradicate invasive plants at the Preserve. IERCD will be mapping a project area, and preparing a proposal for weed management.

WCA staff has been evaluating a proposal made by Vista Communications in August 2019, to site a cell tower on the Preserve. Staff has been clarifying the process and the proposal so that the Board may discuss this proposal at a future meeting.

Within this time, WCA has received eleven letters from nine community members voicing concerns about the proposal. WCA staff has also fulfilled two public records requests regarding the proposed tower, and has received additional commentary by the requester on the provided records, pointing out perceived inconsistencies in Vista's communications to WCA. WCA has recently been informed that a petition supporting an alternative location of Spring Hill (rather than Mt. Baldy Wilderness Preserve) has obtained more than 70 signatures, and is still being circulated. Most of the letters received point out that a tall tower on the WCA property will mar the views currently enjoyed. Most letters express the belief that an alternative site called "Spring Hill" will have less impact on views. Several cite the legal precedent of "prudent avoidance" in cell tower siting. Several letters express a perception that Vista has not been transparent with the community about discussing possible options.

WCA staff is currently evaluating the lease terms proposed by Vista, and plans to ask Vista to hold an additional community meeting to clarify the facts regarding the proposal. Such a meeting is advised before any consideration of a cell tower lease by the WCA board.



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 is preserved in its undeveloped state. The site is publicly accessible for passive recreational use.

Crystal Lake Redevelopment and San Gabriel Canyon Master Planning: Due to three fires in the Forest, there was a delay in USFS staff providing their feedback on the Request for Bid (RFB) packages for Demolition and Construction work. Blue Green Consulting is currently reviewing the feedback received and will provide timeline to complete the final packages. Once ready, the RFB packages will be released for bid. Scope of Work includes the 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, the demolition of several old, unused restrooms and dilapidated ancillary buildings. Design work for the second access point at the East Fork/Oaks Picnic area is on-going. San Gabriel Valley Conservation Corps, utilizing COVID-19

precautions, are continuing their conservation efforts in the San Gabriel Canyon under the direction of US Forest Service staff.

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: Plans are in development to prepare for a construction phase for the entry improvements beginning in the next year. Due to both funding gaps and timeline limits on grant awards the roundabout and main visitor center are expected to be omitted from a first phase of implementation. These proposed changes to expedite timeline and near-term workforce opportunities are included as part of a staff report on the regular agenda for this September meeting.

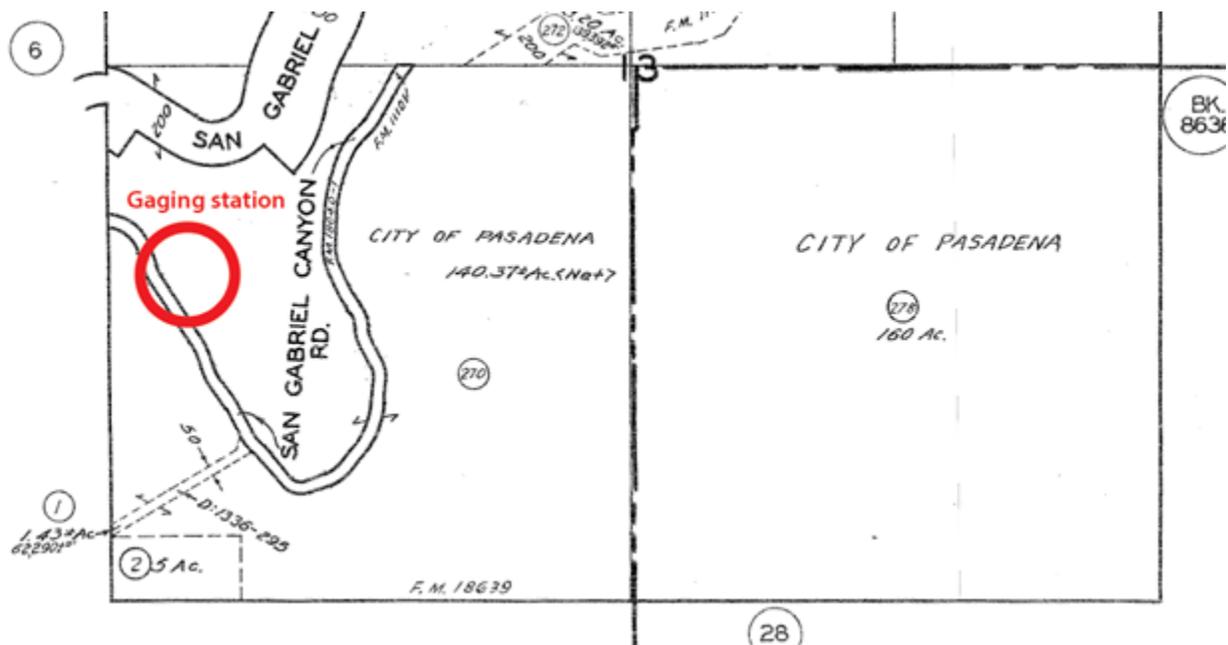


During the pandemic River Wilderness Park has been inundated with visitors from all over the County, often from more urbanized areas. On weekends and especially on holidays, WCA has had to organize extra staffing to manage and educate crowds about lack of water access at the Park. Water access is not safe at River Wilderness Park due to the high water flows that occur from dam releases.

In the last year, WCA staff has experimented with various approaches to signage and staffing to keep visitors out of the river in this dangerous location. However, numerous internet sites which WCA cannot control perpetuate the misconception that river access is possible at the Park.

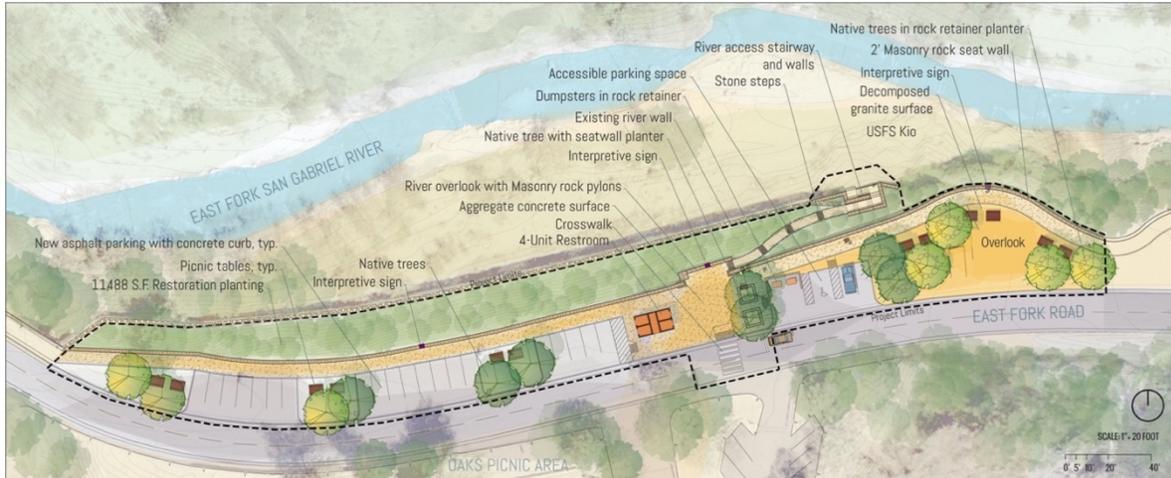
Besides continuing to post and improve signage and procure staffing for anticipated busy weekends, staff is considering 1) changing the name of park to avoid confusion with locations that do provide safe river access 2) posting signage at the Gaging Station, the location where visitors are most likely to attempt to enter the water. WCA has regularly received reports of water rescues that occur when users of River Wilderness Park hike down the unpaved County road and attempt to enter the water at a Gaging station below Morris Dam.

WCA has always posted no swimming signs at RWP, due to the danger posed by high water flows and water releases. WCA has identified that the property where the Gaging Station is located is owned by the City of Pasadena. WCA staff has reached out to City staff to inform them of visitor uses and associated dangers at this location, as well as, provided warning notice signage suggestions.



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 consultant, BlueGreen, has completed its work on the site design for the project's first access point, and is in the process of designing 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 extended for an additional 12-months due to COVID-19 related impacts. WCA is awaiting notification from RMC of its grant award for construction of the Oaks River Access Project (first access point) under the Prop 68 grant. 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

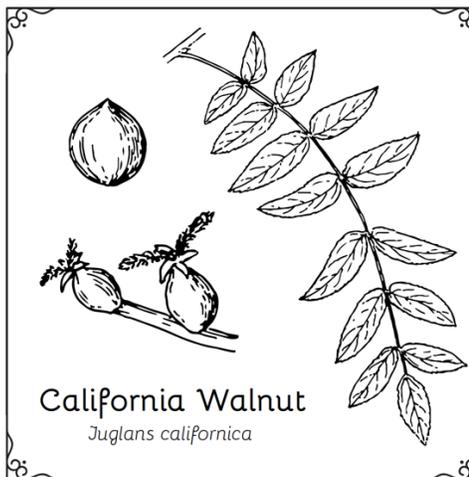
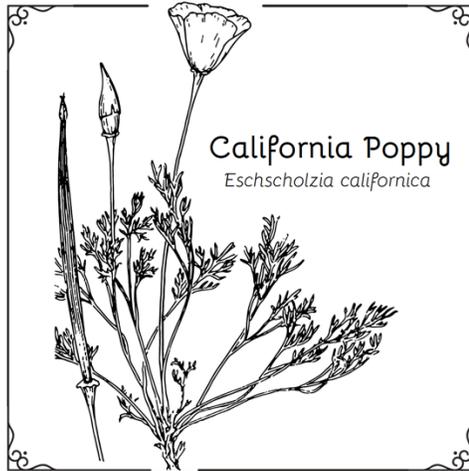
Along a 2.5-mile segment of the East Fork San Gabriel River recreational use is highly concentrated. This heavy use combined with the lack of facilities has resulted in degraded conditions. In response, the Cattle Canyon Project seeks to better manage the recreational use and balance the needs for resource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

South Gate Habitat Restoration Project/Parque Dos Rios: The project team has reassemble and a notice to remobilize has been sent by the Conservation Corps of Long Beach (General Contractor) to their subcontractors. The project has been de-mobilized since February 2020 related initially to awaiting permit amendment approval for LA County Flood Control District and then later due to COVID-19 stay at home orders throughout the nation. The interpretive signs have since been completed and are awaiting delivery to the general contractor, the Conservation Corps of Long Beach.

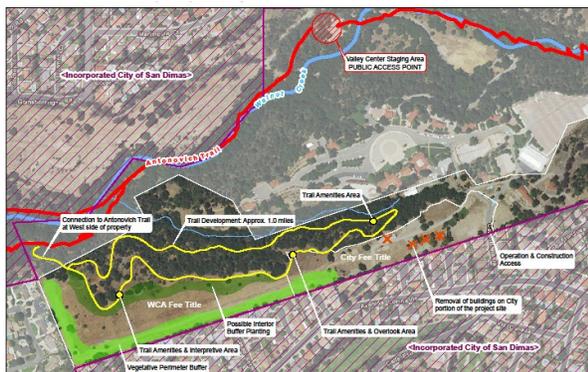


Parque Dos Rios is a 7.8-acre site situated along the Lower Los Angeles River (LLAR) at the confluence with the Rio Hondo in the City of South Gate. The project will create a bike stop amenity for the LLAR trail, with overlook, shade structure, seating and interpretive graphics. The land will be planted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

Walnut Creek Habitat & Open Space: Construction of the West Trail Loop and overlooks are complete with minor punch list items to be followed up on by the Contractor before the City of San Dimas closes out their contract. WCA has provided signage design for botanical metal plates to be installed on boulders along the trail. The signs will identify to visitor's the types of native plants they will see along the trail – samples of artwork shown below. Two interpretive panels will be designed by WCA and will be purchased by the City for WCA to install at the two overlooks.



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 continue to hold one-on-one meetings with project stakeholders this month as the team works toward the implementation of a Lower LA River REACH zone pilot program. A virtual meeting was conducted with LA County Department of Parks and Recreations regarding their participation and to obtain feedback regarding the program and rangers. WCA, MRCA and RMC participated in a safe social distancing tour of REACH Zone 1 hosted by the City of South Gate to study areas of high density of homelessness and public safety issues.

Consultants will be sought to provide services including but not limited to achieving the following program goals:

- 1) Recreational and/or Interpretative/Educational Programs to creatively activate the LA River in REACH Zone 1.
- 2) LA River Safety Ambassador Program to improve public safety for visitors on the LA River in REACH Zone 1.

The work of the consultants will be to create a robust outreach and engagement plan to ensure ongoing information and communication with the public and stakeholder of use and enjoyment in and around the LA River. A Request for Qualification is being finalized for release in September.



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.