

DATE: June 16, 2016

TO: Watershed Conservation Authority Governing Board

FROM: WCA Staff

THROUGH: Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Item 6: Liaison and Activities Report

Regional Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Planning: The Leadership Committee voted to give authority to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works to prepare a region-wide application in response to the Department of Water Resources (DWR) Disadvantaged Communities Involvement Program (DACIP). This work will be performed under the supervision of the Executive Officer of the RMC or his designee as Chair of the Disadvantage Community Sub-committee. The RFP will be submitted to the DWR in July 2016 for initial review and comment. It is anticipated that the State will then have coordination meetings with the Greater Funding Area which includes: Greater LA, Ventura County and Upper Santa Clara.

The San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers Mountains Conservancy and all members of the Leadership Committee have adopted the Memorandum of Understanding and Operating Guidelines renewing commitment to participate in the policy, evaluation, and selection of projects of regional benefit. The renovated commitment 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.

San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority: The SGRDCA Design Team having completed 90% Construction Documents for Stage 1 construction submitted to LA County for plan check approvals. Electrical, Geotechnical and Mechanical County Departments have provided plan check approvals. The Army Corps of Engineers review process is underway. A draft license agreement from County Parks is near the end of the review process and approaching finalization. A disbursement request letter has been provided to LA County Sanitation Districts for review and approval to begin the release SEP funding from escrow account for Construction Document Design fees.

San Gabriel Mountains National Monument: In partnership with the Southern Californian Association of Governments, San Gabriel Mountains National Monument and Angeles National Forest held a Monument Transpiration Workshop on May 26, 2016. Forest supervisor Jeffery Vail introduced new staff and provided an overview presentation of the current access opportunities and challenges faced by the U.S. Forest Service, as well as shared image of localized congestion issues within the Monument that occur at peak period of recreational demand, such as summertime holiday weekends. Other key transportation stakeholder also presented their perspectives on the opportunities and challenges related to access and transit to the Monument. The workshop concluded in a panel discussion, highlighting the importance of regional collaboration through the development and implementation of monument plans.

Watershed Conservation Authority Facebook: We are sharing happenings at WCA's offices at River Wilderness Park, with updates on our projects, partner and community events, and the occasional wildlife sighting. Find us on Facebook at WCA: <https://www.facebook.com/WatershedConservationAuthority/>.

WCA PROJECTS

Duck Farm Project: Project Team is beginning to receive additional (3rd round) comments back from County and Caltrans plan checks. Team is working to address these additional comments to submit for what should be final approvals to complete the for permit stage of the project and allow the team to transition to bid and award. Restroom facility comment pick-ups are in progress by Romtec, a pre-approved State vendor. Caltrans permit section has reviewed drawings for compliance and a maintenance agreement is being generated for review and approval.

Emerald Necklace: The Emerald Necklace Feasibility Study and Implementation Planning Project is identifying trail connections and urban greening projects within the 17-mile Emerald Necklace, located in the heart of the San Gabriel Valley. 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. As a product of this planning study will serve a guide for the coordinated implementation of these projects.

This project is nearing completion. Since the last WCA Board meeting the planning consultants have begun a cost-benefit analysis and comprehensive list of permits required for the 15 projects included in the Phase 1 Implementation Report. A Program EIR is also being prepared for the 15 phase 1 project, within air, greenhouse gas, noise, and traffic studies completed in May. Biological and cultural resource reports are currently being updated prior to the drafting of the EIR in late June and July. Between July and August both a draft Programmatic EIR and a draft Implementation Plan will be produced and reviewed with the Coordination Committee. A public review period is then planned between August and September, with a WCA certification hearing planned for January 2017. The project is on track for completion by December 2016.

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. Working within an evolving framework the project team continues to review local and regional plans and collect relevant data. Additionally, WCA staff is reviewing options to host the final plan online in a digital format for greater public dissemination, and to host our online outreach campaign.

The next advisory committee meeting is July 19, with subsequent meetings planned for the third Tuesday of every third month (quarterly). Following the meeting the work plan will be finalized (below). Staff continues to engage stakeholders, experts, Gateway COG, and cities in the development of assessments and outreach. With all core inventories expected to be completed by July 1 the WCA will move forward with City interviews coordinated with the Gateway Cities COG.

Gateway Greening Work Plan



River Wilderness Park Project (RWP): The RWP is an approx. 75.7 acre property slated 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.

Based on the 2012 adopted RWP Master Plan for the Canyon Inn Property, WCA staff and consultants are currently preparing construction documents for 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 embodies 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. A more in-depth discussion regarding the Entry Improvements Project will be provided under a separate agenda item.

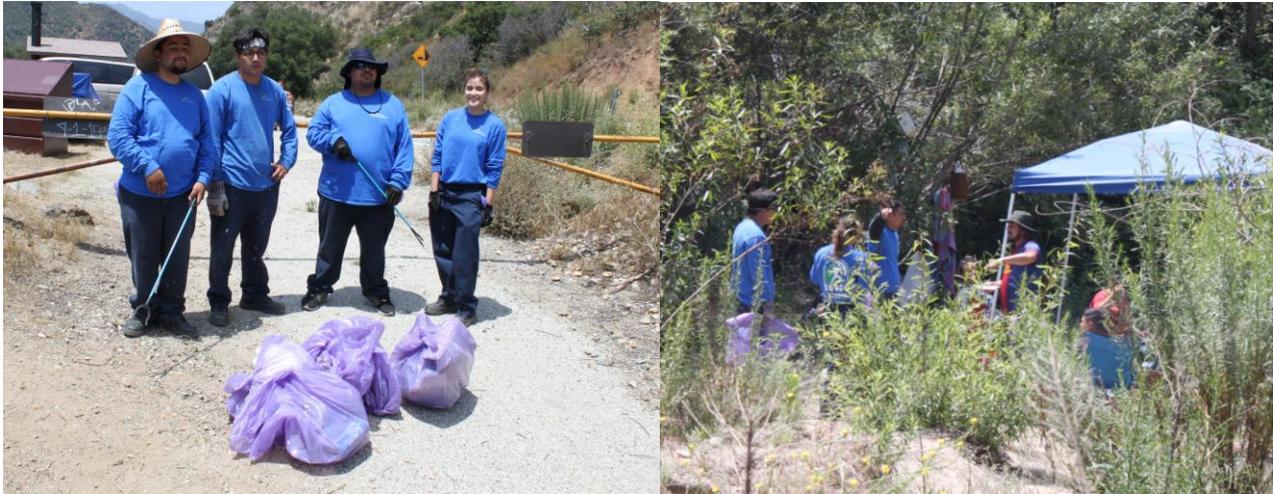
Related to fund raising for the development of the park, the WCA staff hosted a site visit on May 23, 2016 with a Grant Review Team from the 2015 California River Parkways Grant Program. This site visit in response to an approx. \$300,000 funding request to support the development of a river overlooking adjacent to State Route 39 and an extension of the San Gabriel River Bike Path into the park. For the visit Staff invited the project design consultants and partners including the City of Azusa, the Angeles National Forest and San Gabriel Mountains National Monument, Caltrans, Metro, and representatives from the San Gabriel Mountains Forever Coalition to participate. Staff and the project partners successfully briefed the Review Team on the scope and significant of the project, and answered questions related to the grant proposal submitted by the WCA. Final recommendation from the Grant Review Team is scheduled for mid-July.



Also since the May WCA Board meeting, Staff submitted an approx. \$1.9 million grant proposal to Cycle 3 of the State Active Transpiration Program. With a similar proposal submitted last year narrowly missing the scoring threshold for funding, Metro provided in-kind grant writing assistance through a transportation planning consultant, Stantec. The funding request, if funded, will match the anticipated California River Parkways Grant to complete a 1,750 foot bike path extension and roundabout protected highway crossing into the River Wilderness Park.

San Gabriel Canyon Watershed Ranger Program: In continuation of the on-site public engagement program development by the San Gabriel Canyon Confluence with Cattle Canyon Improvements Project, the San Gabriel River Watershed Ranger Program is deploying a crew of six San Gabriel Valley Conservation Corps members to conduct roaming outreach along high-use recreational corridors of the East, North, and West Forks of the San Gabriel River. Outreach targets the cumulative habitat impacts of trash and recreational uses (rock dam building) that results in stream modification. From Memorial Day Weekend, 2016 to Labor Day Weekend, 2016 Conservation corps members will be in the field making contact and speaking with the recreating public in a non-threatening manner about the importance of sustainable recreation, and to offer best management practices such as the Leave No Trace principles. Below are photos from the initial two weeks of outreach.





San Gabriel River Confluence with Cattle Canyon Project: The Cattle Canyon Project seeks to address unsustainable recreation practices, which includes habitat disturbance from dispersed river-side recreation along the East Fork of the San Gabriel River. Specific objectives of the project include: 1) promote stewardship of the public lands; 2) protect watershed ecosystems, including reducing creation and use of anthropogenic pools and onsite littering; 3) enhance quality of recreation, including adequate and safe access and additional public amenities; and 4) develop ecological restoration strategies, including restoration and enhancement of Angeles National Forest and San Gabriel Mountains National Monument.

The current Phase 1 of the Cattle Canyon Project, funded by the RMC, 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.

A final site plan has been developed by project consultant team with guidance and review from WCA and Angeles National Forest staff members. A draft Concept Site Plan & Programming Report is currently in production, as well as the preparation of environmental documents CEQA/NEPA compliance. A public review period, and two public workshops are attentively planned for July. A final report and recommendation regarding CEQA compliance will subsequently be brought to the WCA. Completion of the site plan report and environmental documents review will complete Phase 1 of the Cattle Canyon Project. Further project development and implementation will then begin in Fall of 2016 with initial funding from the Angeles National Forest.

South Gate Habitat Restoration Project/Parque dos Rios: North East Trees and sub-consultants are completing pick-up of 2nd submittal comments with package anticipated to be received before the end of this month for resubmittal to plan check entities. County is confirming with ACOE for an extension of the 408 permit and Caltrans, upon receipt of updated package relocating the existing gate and fence off their ROW will prepare an encroachment permit and maintenance agreement.

The City of South Gate completed the installation of the new water line on Imperial Highway to supply irrigation to the project. ACOE had given verbal approval to run new water line along channel utilizing LACFCD uni-strut connection points and LACFCD is obtaining formal approval to proceed with 408 permit extension. LACFCD has also approved the water line connection and an encroachment permit is pending ACOE action.

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 initial West Phase development. The City and WCA cooperatively completed CEQA review, and independently approved proceeding with development of the West Phase. The initial phase includes site clean-up, passive recreational elements, habitat enhancements, and the planting of a vegetated screening buffer. This phase will accomplish the necessary improvements to provide public access over a portion of the Project Site. Recreational elements include trail development and trail-side amenities (interpretive signage, benches, etc.) that will create a looped spur trail connection to the existing LA County Antonovich Trail. Public access will only be made from the Antonovich Trail, accessible from four nearby County-operated trail staging areas. Site clean-up includes removal of buildings from a portion of the Project Site under City ownership.

Since approval the West Phase at the May 2016 WCA Board meeting Staff has begun working with City Staff to update the project schedule and budget, as well as to identify and coordinate critical task to begin project-level planning, permitting, and implementation.