

DATE: July 21, 2016

TO: Watershed Conservation Authority Governing Board

FROM: WCA Staff

THROUGH: Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Item 6: Liaison and Activities Report

Los Angeles Countywide Park Needs Assessment: In March 2015, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved a motion to initiate the Countywide Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment. The Parks Needs Assessment was completed over the course of 14 months, from March 2015 to May 2016. The process of the Park Needs Assessment consisted of several distinct, yet overlapping phases:

- Project Initiation
 - 40-member Steering Committee formed
 - 9-member Technical Advisory Committee formed
- Inventory
 - Demographic, health, safety and environmental data gathered for community profiles
 - 90 park agencies participated in park inventory
 - Over 3,000 parks inventoried
 - Over 9,000 amenities documented
 - 750 potential park opportunity sites verified by park agencies
- Analysis
 - Park metrics analyzed 186 study areas
- Community Engagement
 - 300 facilitators attended engagement workshops

This represents an unprecedented effort to document existing parks and recreation facilities in cities and unincorporated communities and to use the data to determine the scope, scale, and location of park needs in Los Angeles County. The Park Needs Assessment helped local officials, park agencies, and residents understand the future steps that need to be taken to ensure all communities have adequate access to thriving parks. The report identified a total of **\$21 billion** in Los Angeles County park needs, with high need areas throughout every region of LA County.

Community-Engagement Workshops held within the WCA Territory identified one (1) WCA projects directly, as well as two (2) additional WCA projects that fit the community-identified priorities.

Facility Name	Study Area	Community-Identified Projects
Duck Farm River Park	Unincorporated Pellissier Village-Avocado Heights-North Whittier	\$21M, Build New Regional Park; Equestrian Center
Mt. Baldy Wilderness Preserve and Open Space	Unincorporated Angeles National Forest- Sylmar-Castaic- Val Verde	\$350k, Add Trails at TBD Locations; \$50k, Add Signage at TBD Locations
Walnut Creek Habitat and Open Space	San Dimas	\$525k, add Trails to Walnut Creek Open Space

The Safe, Clean Neighborhood Park, Open Space, Beaches, Rivers Protection and Water Conservation Measure: On Tuesday, July 5th, 2016 the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors voted in support of advancing a parks funding measure to the November ballot. The Safe, Clean Neighborhood Parks, Open Space, Beaches, Rivers Protection and Water Conservation Measure would add an annual parcel tax of one-and-a-half cents per square foot of development for most land uses. This would represent an average of approximately \$22.50 annually for a 1,500 square-foot home. The measure would replace the 1996 Prop A which expires in 2019.

Funds will be allocated to each Los Angeles Countywide Park Needs Assessment study area based on the Per Capita and Structural Improvements Formula. Each Study Area’s allocation percentage of the applicable funding programs shall be the arithmetic mean of Per Capita and Structural Improvements, where Per Capita is weighted two-thirds and Structural Improvements are weighted one-third, and shall be calculated as follows:

$$\text{Allocation Percentage} = [(\text{Per Capita} + \text{Per Capita} + \text{Structural Improvements})/3].$$

The expenditure plan for Maintenance and Servicing (M&S) accounts for 15% of the funding measure. WCA is to review a dedicated allotment of 5.15% of the available 15%, resulting in approximately \$716,854 annually in the first year.

Through a recent survey of 1,218 likely November 2016 Los Angeles County voters, the overall level of support on the L.A. County’s Regional Park and Open Space’s Measure was 69%. Education about the County’s, cities’ and neighborhoods’ park, recreation and open space needs, and the benefits of these important community assets, leads to a six-percentage-point increase in the overall level of support, from 69 to 75 percent. Only 18 percent continue to oppose the measure and 7 percent remain undecided. A 2/3rds majority is required for the Measure to pass.

Expenditure Plan for Potential Parks Funding Measure

Funding Category		\$ 0.015/sq foot dev		
		Annually	35 Years	
<i>Grant Category 1</i>	Community Based Park Investment Program: Funds Returned to Study Areas/Cities through direct grant programs with delegated authority to the Director	35.00%	\$ 32,478,814	\$ 1,136,758,498
<i>Grant Category 2</i>	Safe Parks, Healthy Communities, Urban Greening Program: Funds to projects in High and Very High Need Study Areas through grant programs	13.00%	\$ 12,063,560	\$ 422,224,585
<i>M&S</i>	Local Agency Maintenance and Servicing Funds: Funds directly to Cities, County Dept., local Agencies & Non-profits, through an administrative process from the District	15.00%	\$ 13,919,492	\$ 487,182,213
<i>Grant Category 3</i>	Protecting Open Spaces, Beaches, Watersheds Program: Funds to all eligible entities through competitive grant programs	13.00%	\$ 12,063,560	\$ 422,224,585
<i>Grant Category 4</i>	Regional Recreational Facilities, Trail & Accessibility Program: Funds to all eligible entities through competitive grant programs	13.00%	\$ 12,063,560	\$ 422,224,585
<i>Grant Category 5</i>	Youth and Veteran Job Training & Placement Opportunities Program: Funds to all eligible entities through competitive grant programs	3.80%	\$ 3,526,271	\$ 123,419,494
<i>Program Innovation and Oversight</i>	Strategic Planning, Technical Assistance, Needs Assessment Updates, Innovative Electronic Technologies, Operations of the District: Funds distributed with delegated authority to the Director.	7.20%	\$ 6,681,356	\$ 233,847,462
		100.00%	\$ 92,796,612	\$ 3,247,881,423

AB 2444 (E. Garcia) – California Water Quality, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access Improvement Act of 2016. Money for Parks – Statewide Bond.

AB 2444 would enact the California Parks, Water, Climate, and Coastal Protection and Outdoor Access For All Act of 2016, which, if approved by the voters, would authorize the issuance of \$3.12 billion in State General Obligation bonds to finance parks and open space across the state with 20% of these funds being directed to disadvantaged communities—also referred to as a parks bond. \$25 million is earmarked for RMC

Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Planning: Guided by the Leadership Committee, meetings are scheduled every other month, with the next meeting occurring at the end of July on the 27th. At the last meeting the 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). Staff is in the process of attending each of the regional subcommittee meetings this month to outline a proposal for management framework for the DAC Outreach and Engagement process. The management plan includes coordination with the Greater Funding Area, which includes: Greater LA, Ventura County and Upper Santa Clara.

San Gabriel Discover Center Authority: The SGRDCA Design Team has completed three out of eleven county department plan check reviews for Stage 1 construction. The team is pending review comments from the Army Corps of Engineers and the revised draft of LA County Parks and Recreation license agreement which is in review with County counsel. Upon execution of the license agreement, the release of Prop A funds can begin. Alternatively, the disbursement request letter, documenting the requirements for payments to begin, is pending approval with the Water Board. Once approved, the release of the SEP funds held in an escrow account can begin.

San Gabriel Mountains National Monument: The USDA Forest Service continues to develop a San Gabriel Mountains National Monument Management Plan as an amendment to the existing Angeles National Forest Land Management Plan (LMP). This process includes NEPA analysis of the environmental effect associated with the proposed management policies. In the past month, the portions of an Environmental Assessment document available for public review are Chapter 1, Introduction, and Chapter 2, Proposed Action and Alternatives. This document is available for public review, but the Forest Service will not respond to any comments on the document at this time. The document is provided in advance of the formal public comment period schedule for July/August 2016, to give the public additional time to review and understand the proposed plan before submitting official comments. The Monument Plan will be adopted as an amendment to the LMP. These documents are available online at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=46964>

Watershed Conservation Authority Facebook: We are sharing happenings at WCA's office 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 completing the third round of Agency Plan Check comments received from County and Caltrans plan checks. Restroom facility comment pick-ups by Romtec is complete. Caltrans comment pick-ups are complete and being readied for a return transmittal for approval. Caltrans Operations and Maintenance Agreement has been returned for execution. Environmental Health Department plan approval has been extended.

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 completed 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 projects, within air, greenhouse gas, noise, and traffic studies completed in May. Biological and cultural resource reports are nearing completion. A draft of the EIR is scheduled for public review in September. A WCA certification hearing is 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 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 AB530 Lower LA River Working Group and the RMC-funded GREEN Project.

The next advisory committee meeting will have been held July 19, with subsequent meetings planned for the third Tuesday of every third month (quarterly). Staff continues to engage stakeholders, experts, Gateway COG, and cities in the development of assessments and outreach. In this next quarter the WCA plans to 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. The design development of the park is currently delayed as an encroachment permit for geotechnical investigation within State highway right-of-way is resubmitted to

Caltrans with pick-ups on the traffic control plan. The permit is expected by August 1st. A completed geotechnical report is needed to complete the design work.

Related to fund raising for the development of the park, Staff received notice earlier this month that California Natural Resources Agency has recommended a 2015 California River Parkways Grant Program in the amount of \$299,862. This grant will fund a highway adjacent to the river overlook component of the Entry Improvements Project. In early June Staff also submitted an approx. \$1.9 million grant proposal to Cycle 3 of the State Active Transpiration Program (ATP). 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. Award announcements for ATP are scheduled for the Fall.

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.

An enhanced training program for the Watershed Program involves the enrollment of the SGV Conservation Corps members in a CalNaturalist certification course. This course serves to enhance the environmental literacy of the outreach crew, and is a cooperative effort between the National Forest Foundation, USDS Forest Services, WCA and the University of Californian Cooperative Extension. The class is made up of young adults working in a number of outreach programs related to the National Forest, including the Watershed Program (blue shirts). Three Watershed Rangers are expected to complete the course by the end of July, and will receive a formal certification and can apply to receive 4 units of college credit through UC Davis. Staff has seen a significant benefit from the course as the corps members are engaged in their summer long job duties.



Forest Supervisor Jeffery Vail addressing CalNaturalist class at the Audubon Center at Debs Park

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 by the project consultant team with guidance and review from WCA and Angeles National Forest Staff. 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 September. 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 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. Staff is also engaging the Tzu Chi in discussions to secure trail right-of-way necessary for the project.