

DATE: September 15, 2016

TO: Watershed Conservation Authority Governing Board

FROM: WCA Staff

THROUGH: Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Item 10: 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. 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 report identified a total of **\$21 billion** in Los Angeles County park needs, with high need areas throughout every region of LA County.

Additionally, local public agencies were eligible to submit projects for the Needs Assessment Addendum. Qualifying agencies, including the WCA, were eligible to submit potential projects as Open Space/Nature Center facilities and Regional Specialty Facilities for inclusion in the Addendum. The WCA conducted an internal assessment of need of our eligible facilities to determine potential projects. Projects included facility specific projects, either as capital improvements or deferred maintenance. The following is a list of projects the WCA reported:

#	Facility Name	Study Area	Project Name	Estimate
1	San Gabriel River Trailside Rest Stop	Pico Rivera	San Gabriel River Trailside Rest Stop	\$ 300,000
2	Duck Farm River Park	Unincorporated Pellissier Village-Avocado Heights-North Whittier	Renovation of Duck Farm House	\$ 2,550,000
3			Equestrian Center	\$ 3,640,000
4			River Edge Promenade	\$ 6,500,000
5	Lincoln Avenue Trailhead	Montebello	Equestrian Staging Area	\$ 1,150,000
6			Restroom	\$ 575,000
7			Trail Access and Rest Stop	\$ 2,350,000
8	Montebello Hills Wilderness Preserve and Open Space	Montebello	Pocket Park and Habitat Enhancement	\$ 3,000,000
9			Trail System and Overlook	\$ 2,560,000
10	Mt. Baldy Wilderness Preserve and Open Space	Unincorporated Angeles National Forest- Sylmar-Castaic- Val Verde	Parking Area and Trail Head	\$ 750,000
11			Mt. Baldy Wilderness Preserve Visitor Center	\$ 5,200,000
12			Picnic Area and Waterless Restroom	\$ 750,000
13	River Wilderness Park - Both Sites	Azusa	Reconfiguring Existing Site El Encanto Parking and Road	\$ 1,500,000
14	River Wilderness Park - Canyon Inn Site	Azusa	Utility Connection for the River Wilderness Park	\$ 2,200,000
15			San Gabriel Mountains/RWP Visitor Center	\$ 3,500,000
16	River Wilderness Park - El Encanto Site	Azusa	Replace 2-story Building	\$ 2,800,000
17			Newman's Roost Picnic Area	\$ 2,150,000
18	Walnut Creek Habitat and Open Space	San Dimas	Park Recreation Building	\$ 2,500,000
19			Trail System and Overlook	\$ 1,900,000
Total:				\$ 45,875,000

On July 5, 2016 the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors received the final report of the Parks Needs Assessment and approved the placement of a parks funding measure on the November 8, 2016 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. A 2/3rds majority is required for the Measure to pass.

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

Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Planning: On September 7th from 2-4pm at Lynwood Bateman Hall, The Office of Assembly Speaker Rendon in partnership with the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy and Urban Semillas is hosting a Disadvantaged Community Involvement Forum. As part of Proposition 1, \$9.8 million has been set aside for the Greater Los Angeles-Santa Clara-Ventura IRWMP Funding Area. This forum seeks to engage Non-Governmental and Community-Based Organizations, representatives from disadvantaged and economically distressed cities and interested stakeholders in the LA region about the Disadvantaged Communities Involvement Program. Participants will be informed and will have an opportunity to provide input to ensure disadvantaged communities are beneficiary of the funding allocated through this process and have a deeper understanding on how they can influence and participate in this undertaking. WCA staff is attending this event and has prepared a context map for the RMC for the event.

Looking forward, the RMC as well as WCA is no longer pursuing a management proposal nor will be members of the GLAC Leadership or DAC Committees.

San Gabriel Discovery Center Authority: The SGRDCA has met the Supplemental Environmental Project requirements for disbursements to commence and obtained approval from the Water Boards to proceed. The first required monthly report, schedule of expenditures and invoicing documents were completed and forwarded to LA County Sanitation Districts for approval and processing. License agreement with LA County for site access during construction is anticipated to be executed this month. Upon execution of the license agreement, the release of Prop A funds can begin. Project team is targeting November to obtain all necessary plan check approvals. This timing is dependent on Army Corps of Engineers completing their reviews within the next three months.

San Gabriel Mountains National Monument: The USDA Forest Service has prepared a San Gabriel Mountains National Monument Management Plan Amendment to the existing Angeles National Forest Land Management Plan (LMP). A draft Environmental Assessment for the Monument Management Plan has also been prepared and is currently available for public review. The project areas for this plan covers 246,177 acres of the northern and southeast portion of the San Gabriel Mountains that were established a National Monument in 2014 through a Presidential Proclamation. The Forest Service proposed to change some management direction in the existing LMP to be consistent with the Proclamation.

With the release of the Management Plan and EA, the San Gabriel Mountains Community Collaborative and its various committees are engaged in an in-depth review and preparation of a detailed comment letter. The Collaborative is comprised of representatives from a diverse range of Monument stakeholders working together to represent the interest of the general public in an effort to identify and prioritize sustainable opportunities to improve public safety, the watersheds, recreation, visitor services, stewardship, education and cultural resources. Although the WCA is not a member of the Collaborative, the RMC is represented by Board Member Clark with Mark Stanley serving as her alternate.

Public engagement opportunities for the Monument Plan and EA are being offered throughout September and October, with the comment period running through October 17, 2016. These opportunities include:

- September 10, 1-3 pm, Webinar - Register at: <http://bit.ly/monumentwebinar>
- September 14, 3-8 pm, Pico House, 430 N Main St., Los Angeles, CA 90012
- September 15, 4-8 pm, The Centre, 20880 Centre Pointe Pkwy Santa Clarita, CA 91350
- September 17, 10am - 2 pm, ANF Headquarters, 701 N. Santa Anita Avenue Arcadia, CA 91006
- October 4, 3:30-7:30 pm, Big Pines Lodge, Angeles Crest Highway (HWY 2) Wrightwood, CA 92397

Additional information and copies of the draft planning 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 preparing to submit plan check packages to LA County and Caltrans for final review and approvals. Caltrans Operations and Maintenance Agreement has also been returned for its execution. Environmental Health Department plan approval has been extended. A bid package will be prepared and released upon receipt of plan check approvals and permits.

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. This planning study will serve as a guide for the coordinated implementation of these projects.

Since the last WCA Board meeting an administrative draft of a Program EIR for the 15 Phase 1 projects has been delivered by the consultants and reviewed. A public review draft of Program EIR and the Implementation Report is expected to be released in early October with the review period running through November. A public engagement opportunity is also being planned for mid-October. A WCA certification hearing is planned for January 2017.

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. Staff is currently developing analysis methods to target and quantify greening benefits for the identification and prioritization of best strategies for project implementation. These benefits include water management, active transportation, health, habitat, air quality, climate impacts, safety, security, equity, and economy. This work involves geospatial mapping and assessments, and includes the consideration of a proposal to contract the Cal Poly Pomona Foundation for the professional services of Dr. Weimin Li.

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, the RWP Entry Improvements Project is currently under design development. To inform the design work a geotechnical investigation was conducted in early September after being delayed by Caltrans permitting due encroachment permit is required for borings within State highway right-of-way. With a geotechnical report due to the WCA by early October, the design work is commencing toward a 90% Construction Package. Permitting is expected to initiate in January with a completed bid package available as early as July 2017.

To fund the RWP Entry Improvements, Staff continues to seek grant opportunities. In early June, Staff 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. 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.

Although Labor Day Weekend was the last scheduled dates for the 2016 Summer Season, remaining funds within a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Foundation will allow the program to continue for approximately two more program weekends. WCA and Angeles National Forest (ANF) Staff are presently discussing opportunity to enhance or combine the with the ANF Field Ranger for the 2017 Summer Season.

The following photos demonstrate the Watershed Ranger's activities, including direct engagement with the public, encouraging them to take action to address littering and other recreational impacts.





A CalNaturalist certification course program was offered to the Watershed Rangers as an opportunity to enhance their environmental literacy and improve their interpretive and communication skills. This program was made possible through a cooperative effort between the National Forest Foundation, USFS Forest Services, WCA and the University of Californian Cooperative Extension. Three Watershed Rangers completed the course in July, and received formal certification and can apply to receive 4 units of college credit through UC Davis.

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. A more complete update for this project is provided under a separate agenda item.

South Gate Habitat Restoration Project/Parque dos Rios: Design contract with North East Trees has been extended to allow time necessary to complete pick-up of 2nd submittal comments. The plan check package will be received this month and distributed to the various plan check entities for review and final approval. Team will work closely with the City of South Gate during the review process to potentially accelerate the start of Construction. County, once in receipt of the updated plan check package will work with ACOE to obtain an extension of the 408 permit. Caltrans, upon receipt of updated package to relocate the existing gate and fence off their ROW will prepare an encroachment permit and maintenance agreement.

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.