

DATE: October 25, 2018

TO: WCA Governing Board

FROM: Joseph Gonzalez, Project Manager

THROUGH: Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Item 13: Consideration of a resolution to accept a grant from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy for the San Gabriel River Confluence with Cattle Canyon Improvements project. (RMC09105).

RECOMMENDATION: That the Watershed Conservation Authority Governing Board accept a budget augmentation grant of \$20,000 from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy for the San Gabriel River Confluence with the Cattle Canyon Improvements Project (RMC 09105) increasing the total grant amount to \$790,584.

DESCRIPTION: The project is to complete a feasibility study, design and implementation of site improvements and restoration activities; develop and implement an interpretive outreach program; and prepare, review and finalize a joint National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) document (EIS/EIR) in partnership with U.S. Forest Service, Angeles National Forest (ANF) staff with the goal of promoting sustainable recreational model.

BACKGROUND: The San Gabriel River Confluence with the Cattle Canyon Improvements Project proposes to better manage the recreation use and balance the needs for resource protection; in order to implement the project, the WCA partnered with the U.S. Forest Service through a cooperative agreement. This cooperative agreement will develop a project that promotes sustainable recreation and active uses in the ANF. The future desired condition to be advanced by the proposed project includes developing environmentally sustainable recreation opportunities to meet the needs of a growing urban and culturally diverse population, particularly for day use.

The project seeks the following goals and objectives:

- Provide recreation facilities and infrastructure that are high quality, well-maintained, safe, accessible and consistent with visitors' expectations.
- Shift and concentrate recreational use to certain areas in order to minimize adverse effects over a broader area.
- Promote stewardship of public land by providing quality and sustainable recreation opportunities that result in increased visitor satisfaction.
- Allow for better management of the recreation resources on the Forest.
- Improve riparian habitat conditions in certain areas and make progress toward enhancing stream habitat conditions by restoring vegetation, minimizing invasive plants and noxious weed presence, and developing management strategies to regulate access.

During the summers' of 2013 and 2014, an outreach program focusing on the prevention of specific harmful recreational behaviors was conducted. The outreach program informed the completion of a planning study and a Final Concept Site Plan for which environmental assessments in compliance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Endangered Species Act, and other applicable laws has been completed.

At the onset of the planning process it was identified that the appropriate environmental documentation would likely be a Mitigated Negative Declaration and Environmental Assessment (MND/EA), prepared jointly to increase efficiency. However, in initiating the environmental process WCA and ANF Staff evaluated the proposed actions contained within the Final Concept Plan, identifying potentially significant impacts to the federally threatened Santa Ana Sucker, thusly the project may be shifting concentration of recreational use to certain areas of EFSGR in order to minimize adverse effects over a broader area. Construction related impacts may be significant as well, including installation of abutments for a proposed pedestrian bridge. As it pertains to the NEPA (but not CEQA), the project may have significant socioeconomic impacts due to displacement of recreational users as the overall potential parking capacity at the site will be reduced.

Based on the potential for significant impacts it has been mutually determined by ANF and WCA Staff that an Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) must be prepared and the procedural process for preparing EIR/EIS resulted in an initial extension of the project of 13 additional months with the target completion date initially being October 31, 2017. This portion of the project was funded primarily through Federal dollars. Delays in the Draft EIR/EIS development process—from additional administrative reviews, extensive technical report analyses (especially regarding the Bio chapters), and ANF staffing limitation during fire season—has necessitated additional project extension through March 31, 2019. The certification of the EIR and approval of the San Gabriel River Confluence with the Cattle Canyon Improvements Project will be considered by the WCA Board today, Item 15. The Final EIS is planned to have a signed Record of Decision by Forest Service in Spring 2019 hence the grant extension through next March in case Forest Service requires additional support.

The project has been successful in advancing plans and activities that address a complex project scope through cooperative efforts with ANF, but also acknowledges that the nature of this collaboration has delayed the project timeline and resulted in higher project cost. To cover the cost overage for Consultant Services and administrative expenses, WCA requested from RMC at its October 15, 2018 Governing Board Meeting and was approved a budget augmentation of \$20,000.

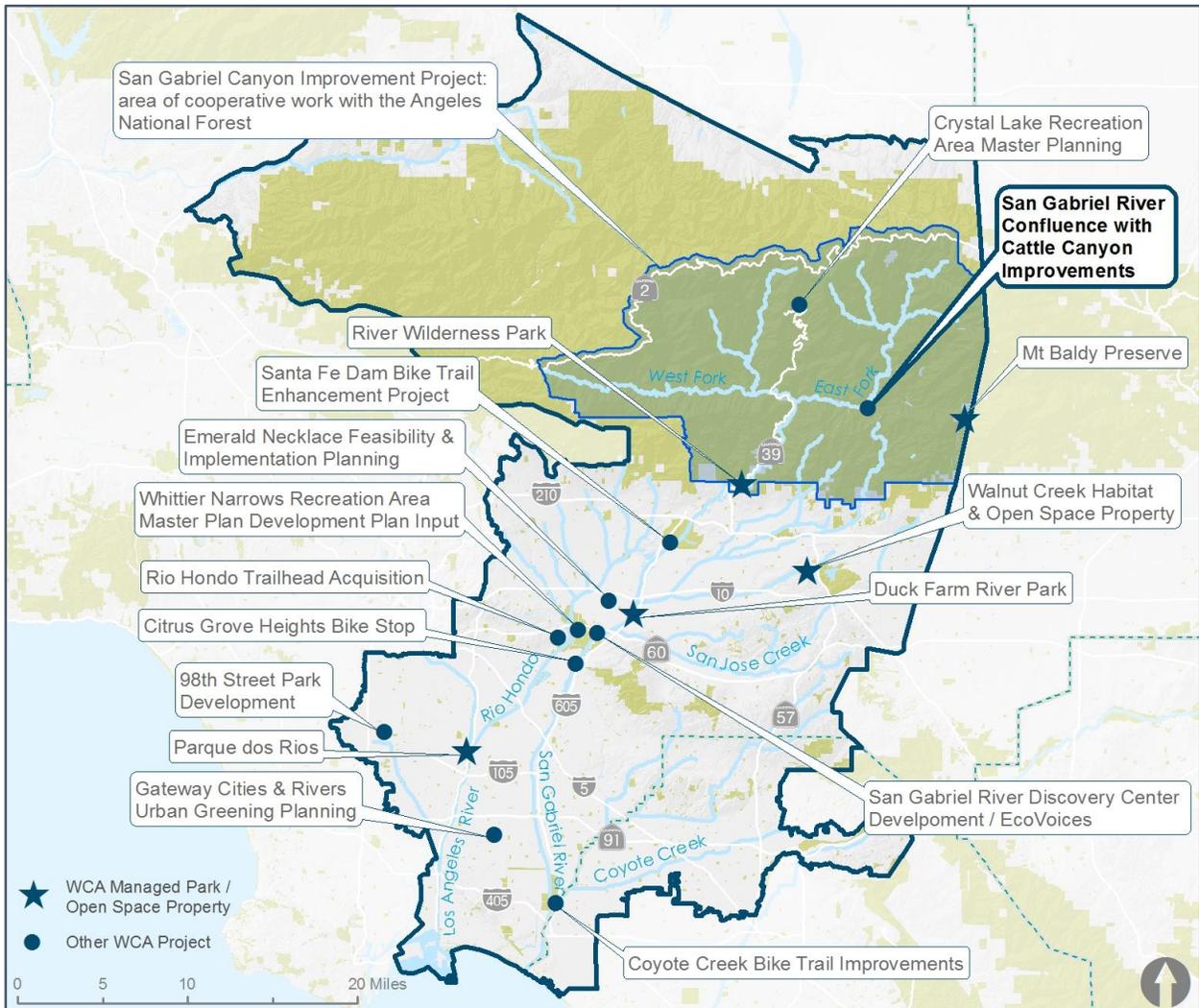
FISCAL INFORMATION: The RMC grant augmentation would add \$20,000 in additional funding bringing the total value of the grant to \$790,584. If approved, the FY18/19 capital budget will be updated to reflect the change in value.

WCA received an additional \$250,000 in federal funding provided by the ANF through a cooperative agreement to cover the cost of additional environmental services needed for the EIR/EIS preparation.



Exhibit A

Territory Map: San Gabriel River Confluence with Cattle Canyon Improvements Project



SAN GABRIEL RIVER CONFLUENCE WITH CATTLE CANYON IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT FINAL CONCEPT SITE PLAN

JANUARY 30, 2017

DESCRIPTION:

Day-use recreation is enhanced by a continuous 2.0 mile "East Fork Scenic Trail". The trail is located adjacent to the road with views of the river and provides access to overlooks, river access trails and backcountry trailheads. Loading/shuttle stops are provided.

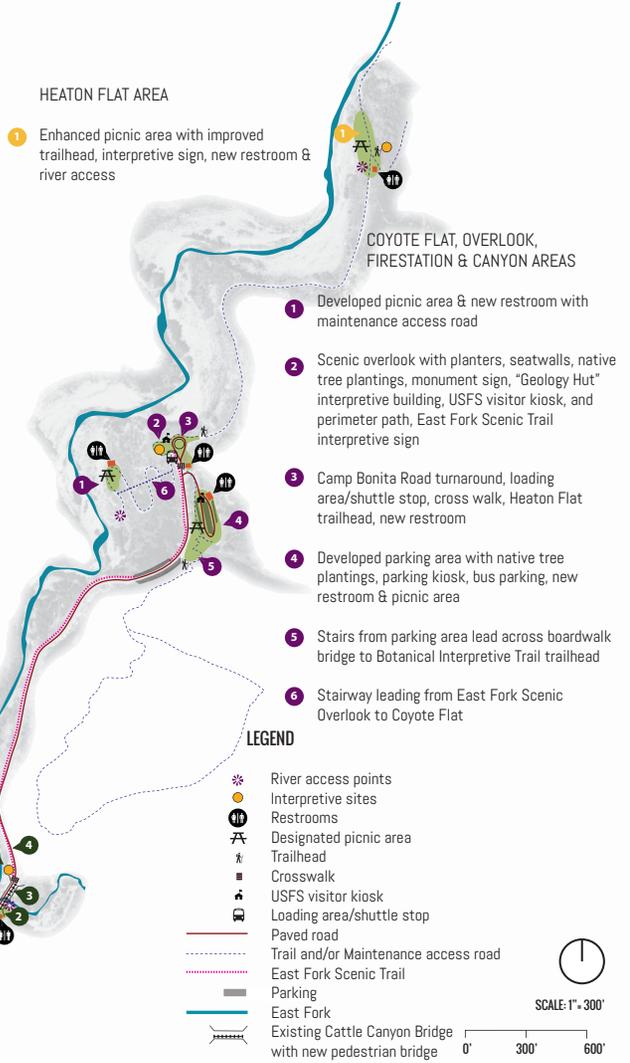
- River access - 6 locations with restrooms, dumpsters & signage
- Parking - Angled and perpendicular bays with curbs, limited roadside parking, parking lot in Former Fire Station area with bus parking
- ROW improvements - Reduced speed, crosswalks, stop signs, footpath along top of slope on south/east side of road, trash grates on drain inlets
- Amenities - Picnic tables, East Fork Scenic Trail, interpretive sites including 2 interpretive trails, scenic overlooks, bilingual signage including wayfinding and trail signage, trailheads, designated loading/shuttle stop locations
- Toilets - 2 and 4-Unit facilities located near river access points and other popular areas
- Trash bins - Small trash receptacles to be located at all river access points and all picnic sites. Dumpsters to be set within rock barriers.
- Areas to bring back to natural condition or restore through native revegetation - Multiple informal trails to river, soil deposits along roadside, seeps/springs on east side of road, stream habitat in tributary behind Oaks Picnic Area, phase out non-native "plantation" plantings

PROJECT AREA TOTALS	
Trailheads	4
Restrooms	10
Crosswalks	7
Designated Picnic Areas	6
East Fork Scenic Trail (mi.)	2.0
Interpretive Sites	4
River Access Points	6
USFS Visitor Kiosk	3
Bus/Tram Stop	3
Parking	270

- OAKS AREAS**
- 1 Beginning of East Fork Scenic Trail
 - 2 River access point with parking, native tree plantings, East Fork Scenic Trail, new restrooms, East Fork Scenic Trail interpretive sign
 - 3 Expansion of existing Oaks Picnic Area, including more sites, larger tables, native tree plantings, new restrooms, a group BBQ area, & botanical interpretive area. Existing parking configuration is retained.
 - 4 River access points with parking, native tree plantings, East Fork Scenic Trail, USFS Visitor Kiosk, picnic area, new restrooms and loading area/shuttle stop, East Fork Scenic Trail interpretive sign
 - 5 Botanical interpretive site

- CONFLUENCE AREA**
- 1 Scenic overlook with Eldoradoville interpretive element, East Fork Scenic Trail interpretive sign
 - 2 River access and new single restroom
 - 3 Pedestrian bridge (parallel with existing bridge) and shuttle stop
 - 4 Portions of road are realigned to accommodate East Fork Scenic Trail

- JUNCTION AREA**
- 1 Three way stop with emergency vehicle turnaround
 - 2 Portions of road are realigned to accommodate East Fork Scenic Trail



October 25, 2018 - Item 13

RESOLUTION 2018-22

RESOLUTION OF THE WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TO ACCEPT A GRANT FROM THE RIVERS AND MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY FOR THE SAN GABRIEL RIVER CONFLUENCE WITH CATTLE CANYON IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (RMC09105).

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

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

WHEREAS, this action accepts a budget augmentation grant from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy for the San Gabriel River Confluence with the Cattle Canyon Improvements Project; and

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

Therefore be it resolved that the WCA hereby:

1. **FINDS** that this action is consistent with the purposes and objectives of the WCA.
2. **FINDS** that the actions contemplated by this resolution are exempt from the environmental impact report requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
3. **ADOPTS** the staff report dated October 25, 2018.
4. **ACCEPTS** a budget augmentation grant of \$20,000 from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy for the San Gabriel River Confluence with the Cattle Canyon Improvements Project (RMC09105) increasing the total grant amount to \$790,584.

~ End of Resolution ~

//

Motion: _____ Second: _____

Ayes: _____ Nays: _____ Abstentions: _____

Resolution 2018-22

Passed and Adopted by the Board of the
WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
On October 25, 2018

M. Janet Chin, Governing Board Chair

ATTEST: _____
David Edsall, Jr.
Deputy Attorney General