

**DATE:** April 6, 2020  
**TO:** RMC Governing Board  
**FROM:** Mark Stanley, Executive Officer  
**SUBJECT:** Item 9D: Liaison and Activities Report

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## RMC ACTIVITIES

### Strategic Planning Board Retreat

The RMC Governing Board (Board) plays a critical role in ensuring the agency appropriately governs and fulfill their mandate to advance the public interest. In today's rapidly changing environment, it is important that RMC strategically plan for its sustainability and future. It must also ensure that the agency effectively serves the needs of the public. The Board assumes a large share of the responsibility for the success of the agency as it provides an important link between the agency and the outside environment in which the agency functions.

The purpose of the strategic planning board retreat is to develop a three to five-year blueprint for the agency's future. A Strategic Planning Board Retreat benefits RMC in the following ways:

- 1) Brings clarity and agreement on mission and vision.
- 2) Helps the agency to prepare for the future by anticipating and managing change.
- 3) Increases effectiveness and efficiency in allocating resources to achieve goals.
- 4) Aligns the board and staff.
- 5) Improves decision-making.

To accomplish this, it is important that the Board work with the Executive Officer to establish a strategic planning process, participate in the process, and approve the final strategic plan.

Because strategic planning takes time and effort, it is recommended that the Board delegate a Strategic Planning Retreat subgroup comprised of 2-3 board members to provide guidance throughout the process and to help conduct a 1-day strategic planning retreat with the board and staff.

Current world health response to COVID-19 may have an impact on RMC's strategic approach to natural resources in the future. In recognition of impacts on social conditions and economics the way to plan may be minimally or significantly altered, thus staff will monitor activities over the next several month to determine the conservancy response.

### River Ranger Program (AB 1558- C. Garcia)

Since February 2018, The Rivers and Mountains Conservancy and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and their respective JPA's (WCA and MRCA) have been collaborating jointly on the implementation of the River Ranger Plan Development, intended to develop a framework for a network of River Rangers who assist the public at sites along the Los Angeles River and its tributaries. The bill was enacted in 2017 to address the limited contact with and responsibility for the river by communities, working in coordination with current revitalization programs to encourage engagement with the river as a welcoming community resource.

Under the bill, the program is intended to do the following: Establish a Los Angeles River identity; Improve public safety for visitors; Foster collaboration among those with jurisdiction over the river; Protect parks, open space, and other public space; Engage communities in the protection and preservation of the River and its resources; Promote diversity and inclusion; Promote equal access and equity among all communities along the River with regard to the development and placement of improvements along the river; Monitor the physical conditions, environmental health, and development of green space along the River, and Coordinate the work of river rangers with programs and services.

On May 31, 2019, the Los Angeles River Ranger Program Establishment Plan was delivered to the State Legislature. The full report and supplemental documents may be downloaded at [www.rmc.ca.gov](http://www.rmc.ca.gov)

Currently, work is being done to establish next steps to rollout the River Ranger Program and the establishment of REACH (River, Education, Adventure, Community, and Habitat) Zones. These will be 3-4 mile stretches along the River, including tributaries, with specific aspects that will lend itself to a highly visible location for River Rangers including access to the River, proximity to a publicly accessible park, trails and open space. The establishment of a REACH Zone will create River appreciation, the benefits rippling out into surrounding communities and revitalization efforts. The Plan identifies criteria and factors to consider when locating these REACH Zones.

**Lower Los Angeles River Working Group (AB 530):**

With the completion of the Lower Los Angeles River Revitalization Plan (LLARRP), the Implementation Advisory Group (IAG) continues to meet at the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works headquarters in the City of Alhambra. The purpose and charge of the IAG is to:

- 1) provide a public venue for discussion of proposed projects/programs related to the Lower LA River;
- 2) Ensure proposed projects/programs are consistent with the goals and objectives of the Lower LA River Revitalization Plan; and
- 3) Maximize multi-use opportunities and community benefits by encouraging collaboration among the many project proponents and organizations in the project area.

In its role as an advisory body, the IAG will provide guidance on issues presented before them, but ultimately, individual entities with jurisdiction along the river corridor including the LA County Flood Control District, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and the cities will continue to have decision-making authority. The IAG aims to ensure that subsequently implemented projects are carried out in accordance with the LLARRP and that stakeholders continue to have a voice in implementation. Project proponents interested in submitting their projects to the IAG can fill out the [Project Review Package](#) and send it to [LowerLARiver@dpw.lacounty.gov](mailto:LowerLARiver@dpw.lacounty.gov) for review.

The IAG members and committees will work together to further define the roles and guidelines of the IAG in the upcoming months. The IAG will include four sub-committees, including:

- 1) Programs & Policies;
- 2) Public Realm, Environment, Water, Infrastructure;
- 3) Public Advisory & Community Engagement; and
- 4) Future Committee TBD (as-needed).

The next Lower LA River IAG Meeting has been **cancelled** on Wednesday, March 25<sup>th</sup>.

The committee meetings will first be comprised of members of the Lower LA River Revitalization Plan Working Group; however, the committees may choose to invite representatives of other agencies and organizations as needed to address committee needs.

Steering and sub-committee meetings will be held quarterly. The next SubCommittee meeting is scheduled for second quarter 2020 (TBD). This will be a new committee meeting format where all three committees will be present, and the meeting will be run by the three committee chairs. The sub-committees are:

- 1) Programs & Policies
  - a. Chair, Antonio Hicks, Public Counsel
  - b. Vice Chair, Dan Knapp, Conservation Corps of Long Beach
- 2) Public Realm, Environment, Water, Infrastructure
  - a. Chair, Kayla Kelly-Slatten, Conservation Corps of Long Beach
  - b. Vice Chair, Kelsey Jessup, The Nature Conservancy
- 3) Public Advisory & Community Engagement
  - a. Chair, Laura Cortez, East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice
  - b. Vice Chair, TBD

All committees are continuing to work on establishing a project review process and will discuss how each committee can support the development and implementation of projects, programs, policies, and efforts. Regarding a review process, the two main objectives for the sub-committees will be to:

- 1) Allow projects that have been submitted for funding to present and retain feedback, which will then be delivered to a governing Board/reviewing body for consideration, and
- 2) Allow developing projects the opportunity to gain feedback on concepts and ideas, as well as to find additional partners and funding.

RMC schedules proposed project presentations (as needed) by RMC grant applicants before the appropriate IAG committees to allow Lower LA River stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback on proposed projects before they are recommended for funding to the RMC Board. Any comments received on projects will be included in recommendation reports.

*The IAG consists of the District as the chair, the RMC, the United States Army Corps of Engineers, the fifteen Lower LA River cities and the chairs of the committees. The IAG and the committees will each meet quarterly. All meeting materials and schedules will be posted on the website – [www.LowerLARiver.org](http://www.LowerLARiver.org)*

### **IRWMP Planning Activities**

On June 26<sup>th</sup>, the GLAC Leadership Committee met to approve the list of projects that they will move forward with putting together the applications for IRWMP Proposition 1, Round 1. The list of projects that will move forward to the application phase is below (due 11/5/19). The Leadership Committee decided to compete for all funding that has been allocated to the entire funding area (~\$34M).

The March 25, 2020 GLAC IRWM Leadership Committee Meeting is cancelled.

### **Los Angeles River Master Plan Update – LA County**

The County of Los Angeles is undergoing a process to update the LA River Master Plan, a comprehensive approach covering all 51 miles of the River. The effort was launched to update the original 1996 master plan, synthesizing more recent ideas for portions of the River and bringing a comprehensive vision to the transformation of the LA River. The process will be complete in 2020. County Public Works has developed a website with project information and data, including technical reports: <http://www.larivemasterplan.org/>

First draft of the master plan was distributed to the Steering Committee in January 2020. Comments were due February 13. A public draft is expected to be released Spring 2020.

## **RMC ACTIVE PROJECTS**

### **Willowbrook Walking Path/Compton Creek (RMC14003):**

The RMC provided a grant in the amount of \$300,000 to the Los Angeles Conservation Corps as part of the Willowbrook Walking Path Compton Creek extension. The LACC applied for an Urban Greening Grant through the Strategic Growth Council and was awarded the full request in the amount of \$798,815. Additional matching funds were committed by other project partners including the State Coastal Conservancy and the Office of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas (2nd District). Matching funds provided by the funding partners and the grant funds received by the Strategic Growth Council bring the total project cost to \$1,698,815.

This project includes the creation of a ½ mile permeable walking path and 2,700 linear foot by 6-foot riprap swale constructed with river rock to capture debris and treat runoff before it enters Compton Creek.

Work began on this project in September 2018 with grubbing of the site. The LACC will continue the grading and move on to construction of a fence line, retaining wall, and landscaping. Fall 2019, tasks associated with the drainage swale behind the retaining wall were continued. Catch basin construction underway. Targeted project completion in June 2020.

### **View Park and Recycled Water System Development Project (RMC17001):**

The View Park and Recycled Water Development Project is underway. Project grant to the City is for \$2,000,000 which includes a wildlife corridor project in the City of Signal Hill that will establish a new 1.86 acre park and the associated construction of a recycled water system. The project will reclaim a municipally owned industrial site and provide a recycled water system to serve the proposed park as well as retrofit three existing parks and the Promontory Home Owner's Association common landscaped areas, connect an urban trail system, prevent runoff pollution from contaminating the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers and annually save approximately 40- acre feet of potable water.

The Park construction is expected to start Spring 2020. Construction completion is projected to be September 2020. The Recycled Water Line construction will tentatively begin in June 2020 with projected completion date of February 2021.

### **Recycled Water Campus, San Gabriel River Parkway (RMC 17004):**

Grant was approved by RMC Board and the project is underway. Grant from the RMC is for \$1,000,000.

This project supports low-impact development stormwater management features, such as swales, landscaping and permeable pavements and walkways; a stormwater capture system to augment the recycled water supply and reduce flood risk. In addition, this project will create habitat for Monarch butterflies, a migratory species proposed for endangered species candidate status; and create 3.5 acres of park-like open space with public access to the San Gabriel River. The project includes many interpretive and education aspects with an outdoor amphitheater, demonstration gardens for native plants, a working model of the San Gabriel River, eco-friendly garden, multi-lingual signage, and other visitor facilities focused on water education, and provides multiple benefits to economically disadvantaged communities. This project is part of the Groundwater Reliability Improvement Project (GRIP), fully funded at \$119 million. The project is now known as the Albert Robles Recycling Facility (ARC) and held its Grand Opening this past summer. WRD has requested additional time to close out the grant through December 2019, and still in process of close-out.

### **Bassett High School Campus Green Infrastructure Project (RMC 17005):**

Grant from the RMC is for \$652,520, project is underway. This project will enhance campus “green infrastructure”, urban habitat, and demonstrate sustainable public landscaping in terms of water use, improved infiltration, and storm water management. Bassett High School is located in underserved area of La Puente, in San Gabriel River sub watershed. The region’s impervious grey infrastructure impairs groundwater recharge and infiltration. Proposed Green Infrastructure retrofits will reduce water use on campus by systematic turf grass reduction: planting over 2700 native, drought-tolerant trees & shrubs in mulched planters to enhance biodiversity and absorb storm water and run-off. Creating a thriving Urban Forest on campus will clean air and sequester greenhouse gas emissions and reduce Urban Heat Island Effect through shade cover. Creation of bioswales, and strategic permeable surface retrofits will collect, capture, and infiltrate storm water from campus preventing runoff from entering local waterways.



The project will encourage underserved students and community residents to participate in habitat restoration and water resources protection, explore and enjoy the campus, and learn how to connect to the region’s surrounding natural areas.

Amigos has finalized an agreement with the school district and has worked with County Public Works to present plans and work with the school district. Amigos continued site preparation including:

- Grading and grubbing complete
- Bioswale by contractor (50% complete): Diversion structure and pipes to swales are complete
- Turf Removal by Youth Corps: Turf removed, trail trenching complete
- Temp Irrigation Drip Line: Installation in progress. Points of connection have been made, main line is installed, and lateral lines have begun.

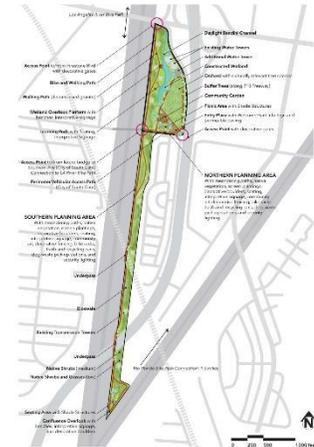
Project should be completed. Amigos de los Rios submitted their final payment request on January 7, 2020. RMC staff will confirm completion of project before closing out grant.

### **Planning for the Urban Orchard Development (17006):**

Planning for the Urban Orchard Development grant to the Trust for Public Land is in the amount of \$845,000 with an additional \$1,387,401 that was approved at the Board meeting in May for design and construction of the wetlands component for the Orchard (RMC 18010). The project will transform 30 acres of unused, vacant land between the I-710 Freeway and the LA River into new, critically needed green infrastructure and an urban park, including an urban orchard and over one-mile of new riverfront walking and bike paths. Project deliverables include a detailed concept plan for the 30-acre park site, a feasibility study to determine the most appropriate stormwater best

management practices to be utilized at the site, and a complete set of construction drawings for the 7 acres park project area that include an orchard with culturally-relevant tree species, community gathering spaces, picnic areas, interpretive elements, native plants, and walking and bicycle paths that will eventually connect with the existing bike path along the LA River.

The City continues to host public workshops to receive input from the community for this project and has also received grant funds for the project implementation. The RMC previously approved a grant extension from June 30, 2019 to June 30, 2020 and reduction in project scope. This allows sufficient time to complete 100% construction drawings for the 7 acres and the stormwater management system that includes pumping water from the Bandini Channel and obtaining permits for the constructed wetland and diversion structure from the Bandini Channel.



### **West Coyote Hills Open Space Acquisition (17007):**

Grant to the City is in the amount of \$2,000,000 for this acquisition. The City of Fullerton informed the RMC that they have been successful in obtaining all funds needed to complete the acquisitions of Neighborhoods 1 and 3. The City has completed its appraisal and is awaiting review by a third-party agency. The City has also completed a Preliminary Title Report. A Purchase and Sale agreement as well as a Remedial Action Plan are being developed currently and are expected to be brought to their city council for approval this winter. Escrow is expected to close around May 2020.

### **Long Beach Municipal Urban Stormwater Treatment (LB MUST) Project (RMC 17009):**

The Long Beach Municipal Urban Stormwater Treatment (LB-MUST) Project is underway, this grant to the City is for \$2,000,000 and will improve water quality by intercepting and treating the dry weather flows and a portion of the first flush of stormwater runoff normally discharging into the Los Angeles River. The byproduct of the LB-MUST water quality treatment is recycled water which can be used to sustain proposed wetlands riparian habitat. The wetlands will be part of the total treatment train of the LB-MUST as well as function as a storage basin for the recycled water. Delays were encountered in design and construction due to a site relocation of the project to accommodate bridge improvements by the City of Long Beach at the Shoemaker Bridge site. An extension was provided to the City to allow sufficient time to accommodate for this change in the design and construction timeline through December 2020, though it is anticipated that the City will require additional time to complete the project.

### **Parkway Basin Water Quality Improvement Project (17011):**

The Parkway Basin Water Quality Improvement Project grant to the County of Los Angeles is in the amount of \$268,500 and includes the construction of 30 parkway basins in the unincorporated Los Angeles County. A Parkway is typically defined as the area between a road's curb and the sidewalk. Parkway basins are designed to capture and treat stormwater and dry season flow (urban runoff), utilizing urban runoff for irrigation and facilitating infiltration to groundwater. These basins are constructed by excavating and lowering a portion of parkway, then cutting an opening in the curb to facilitate the flow of water from the street. The basins contain rock reinforced slopes to prevent erosion, along with the vegetation which will detain, remediate, and help infiltrate urban runoff. When a basin is full, any additional urban runoff will be unable to enter and will continue to travel in the gutter eventually to the storm drain system. Parkway basins have been successfully constructed for many years in numerous cities including: Tucson, Arizona; New York City; Portland, Oregon; and other municipalities. Locally, parkway basins have been constructed successfully in Panorama City and Studio City.

The identification of priority sites and project locations (task 1) was completed in January 2018 and construction of all 30 Parkway Basins was completed in September 2019. The County and The River Project has already begun to monitor the functions of these basins and to coordinate with the Stewards to maintain the basins.

**Los Cerritos Wetlands Acquisition of the Bryant Properties (RMC 17013):**

This grant to the LCWA is in the amount of \$1,000,000. The Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority (LCWA) currently owns approximately 177 acres of coastal wetland habitat within the Lower San Gabriel River watershed in the Cities of Seal Beach and Long Beach and the LCWA is seeking to acquire the frontage and remaining Bryant-Dakin, LLC Properties located along 2<sup>nd</sup> Street/Westminster Avenue in the City of Long Beach, totaling approximately 18 acres (Los County Assessor Parcel Nos 7237-020-053 and 7237-020-054). The LCWA is seeking to acquire the remaining two Bryant-Dakin LLC retained parcels that extend across the San Gabriel River and along the Haynes Cooling Channel at 2<sup>nd</sup> Street/Westminster Avenue. The west parcel is approximately 12 acres in size and is south along 2<sup>nd</sup> Street/Westminster Avenue and the east parcel is approximately 6 acres located on the isthmus just north of the LCWA Property on the east side of the San Gabriel River.

LCWA received approval from the Department of General Services on an appraisal report on the Bryant Properties. LCWA is still negotiating with the land owner to acquire the properties.

**Los Cerritos Wetlands Planning and Restoration Project (17014):**

This grant is to the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority (LCWA) in the amount of \$500,000. The Los Cerritos Wetlands is one of the last remaining estuarine systems in southern California, located in the Cities of Long Beach and Seal Beach. The LCWA adopted the Final Los Cerritos Wetlands Complex Conceptual Restoration Plan (CRP) in August 2015 with the next step being environmental review of the CRP. The LCWA is seeking to complete the environmental review of the CRP which is required to satisfy the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.

A meeting with the Steering Committee, two Technical Advisory Meeting, and two public meetings have been held to solicit comments about an Optimized Restoration Plan, which is a hybrid alternative from the CRP's three alternatives. The CEQA approach is to complete a Programmatic EIR for the entire 500-acre property. The CEQA process was initiated on March 8, 2019 with the filing of the Notice of Preparation and Initial Study. The LCWA anticipates releasing a Draft EIR later this year 2020.

**Emerald Necklace Rio Hondo and Peck Park Water Conservation Project (RMC 17015):**

Grant to Amigos de los Rios in the amount of \$617,385 for this project which will enhance biodiversity, water quality, stormwater & urban run-off management along Rio Hondo Emerald necklace & within Peck Park by adding green infrastructure elements along River Parkway. This area is located within eastern Los Angeles County's underserved El Monte and is adjacent to County Bike Trail, residential areas and schools. Arterials cross the right of way and produce runoff and air pollution that negatively impacts river parkway and local ecosystems. The proposed multi-objective water quality project will improve watershed health, habitat, and trails along the Emerald Necklace's Rio Hondo River. It will remove invasive plants and restore biodiversity by planting over 1175 native & drought-tolerant trees and shrubs suited to multi-year droughts.

Significant invasive removal has been completed, with the monitoring, treating, and removing of previously removed areas continuing. 1205 shrubs and 120 trees have been planted. Tree stakes were installed for trees previously planted; shrubs cared for. Installation of the Irrigation to support trees and shrubs planted along the entrance bioswale was completed July 18, 2019. The second phase of the irrigation will be integrated into the construction of the parking lot BMP's.

In Q4 2019 October 1- December 31 Amigos held 1 Emerald Necklace Volunteer Stewardship at Peck Road Water Conservation Park. At this event, Amigos engage youth and community members in urban and community forestry, Community Science, green infrastructure element implementation. stewardship events run three hours and were held on October 5 (51 volunteers).



**Phil and Nell Soto Park (RMC17018):**

On September 27, 2018, the City of Pomona conducted the official groundbreaking for the Phil and Nell Soto Park in the City of Pomona. The 1.76 acre park will provide for active and passive recreation opportunities and includes a variety of California native plants and trees throughout the park, a butterfly habitat, and a bird sanctuary.

The Rivers and Mountains Conservancy provided a grant for the acquisition of this park and the City has recently accepted an additional grant in the amount of \$1 Million for the park construction from Proposition 1 (water bond). The park design includes natural systems to treat urban stormwater runoff, infiltration and retention of stormwater to mitigate flooding. The park was designed by Architerra Design Group and the Construction will be managed by CEM Construction. There has been a request by the City to extend the completion date to June 30, 2020 and an additional \$186,257, pending RMC approval.

There was a grand opening on February 8, 2020.



**San Gabriel Mountain Community Collaborative (RMC17024):**

The San Gabriel Mountains Community Collaborative (SGMCC) held its latest meeting on March 26, 2020.

The collaborative continues to work on challenges faced by the forest regarding community access, visitor management, and protection of natural resources. Meeting Objectives include:

- 1) Explore members' roles and commitments to the Collaborative as we transition to actively pursuing projects and initiatives with the Angeles National Forest.
- 2) Review each ad hoc committee's progress on the action plan and identify next steps.
- 3) Review updated Steering Committee selection protocol.
- 4) Take care of general SGMCC business including membership updates, announcements, etc.
- 5) Coordination with Forest Service and aligning Collaborative goals with Forest Service priorities.

National Forest Foundation project continues through March 2021, the Collaborative will be finalizing the Action Plans and start implementation of the Action Plan through 2021.

*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.*

**Compton Creek Walking Path Phase II (RMC 18001)**

Provide an extension of the walking/cycling path which leads to the Compton Bike Trail. Project is currently underway with work being performed by the LA Conservation Corps.

**Sleepy Lagoon Planning Project (RMC 18003)**

The outreach, design and planning process will involve a collaboration with a number of organizations and agencies including Communities for a Better Environment (CBE), La Cosecha Colectiva (the Collective Harvest) and various local homeowner associations near Bell and surrounding cities. The grantee kicked off several community meetings which were well attended and gathered input regarding the prospective monument, design ideas, and its potential location.

**Trask Reservation Water System Improvement Project (RMC 18006)**

The Boy Scouts of America, Greater LA Area Council, (GLAAC BSA) requested funding from RMC to hire an engineering consultant to determine the camp's various water system needs and provide an engineering estimate of expected costs. The resulting report will enable GLAAC BSA to pursue additional funding opportunities to move forward with the necessary procurement, installation, and construction of the proposed improvements and upgrades, and ultimately restore the camp's potable water access.

Comments were received from SWRCB DDW on the preliminary design concept report, noting additional requirements for safety and compliance. BSA is incorporating these comments into the revised 30% project design and the technical specifications. The final geotechnical report was received, and recommendations were incorporated into the 30% design and technical specifications. The revised 30% project design was submitted to SWRCB DDW to obtain any additional comments. Based on the revised project design, the project construction cost was updated for our pending Proposition 68 proposal and forwarded to the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy for consideration.

BSA received approval for an \$90,200 and extension through September 30, 2020 to complete their environmental compliance at the last Board meeting in January 2020.

#### **Walnut Park Acquisition (RMC 18007)**

This grant was recently approved at the January 28, 2019 RMC Board meeting to provide a grant to the LA County Department of Parks and Recreation for the Walnut Park Acquisition. This acquisition includes a total of 0.5-acre parcels: APN 6201-028-014, 6201-028-016, and 6201-028-018, for the creation of a new pocket park located in the Walnut Park community. The grant is in the amount of \$1,265,000 and the acquisition was officially completed in June 2019.

#### **Acquisition of the LA River Incubator Site (RMC 18008)**

This grant is to the Watershed Conservation Authority. As part of the Lower Los Angeles River Grant Sub-Program (Board Resolution 2018-02), the Green Incubator project will serve as a base and catalyst for the implementation of the plan by building capacity, providing coordination, and facilitating collaboration by and for all community stakeholders. The funding would cover acquisition of a site in the vicinity of the Lower Los Angeles River or the Los Angeles River and Rio Hondo River Confluence, and related build-out expenses, and project management for due diligence and site selection. RMC is currently completing an appraisal on a proposed site in South Gate.

#### **Emerald Necklace San Gabriel River Habitat Restoration Project (RMC 18009)**

This project will restore a river parkway trail on the San Gabriel River between Live Oak Avenue and Peck Road that is part of the San Gabriel River Corridor Master Plan, the LA County Regional Bike Plan, and the Emerald Necklace Plan. This project will be implemented by Amigos de los Rios, and will improve watershed health, rain water and runoff infiltration, urban forest coverage and native habitat, and provide significant heat island reduction and recreation benefits to local communities and regional trail users of the San Gabriel River Trail.

#### **Urban Orchard Project Construction (RMC 18010)**

The Urban Orchard Development is a multi-benefit, passive park located along the LA River and the Rio Hondo Channel confluence in the City of South Gate. The Project is an identified priority (Project 155) in the Lower LA River Revitalization Plan and is part of a larger vision to transform 30-acres of unused, vacant land between the I-710 Freeway and the LA River into new, critically needed green infrastructure and an urban park, including an urban orchard and over one-mile of new riverfront walking and bike paths. The Phase 1 site comprises seven acres owned by the City of South Gate and will create one acre of functioning wetland habitat in a heavily developed, urban area that would treat and utilize stormwater from the adjacent Bandini Channel to irrigate the park and provide the community with a new greenspace. Construction is planned to start Fall 2020.

### **Central Jefferson High Green Alley Multi-Benefit Stormwater Project (RMC 18011)**

The Central-Jefferson High Green Alley Multi-Benefit Stormwater Project will renovate a 54,446 square-foot public alley right of way in a high density 100-acre neighborhood block in South Los Angeles. Project improvements will include the installation of high albedo pavement, permeable pavers, permeable pavement, street tree planting, infiltration trenches, a dry well system, planting of native vines and trees, educational and mile marker signage, public art and traffic calming measures including planted bump-outs, crosswalk striping, lights and way finding signage. Of the total alley, 34,733 sq-ft will include stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) and an underground drywell system capturing a total tributary area of approximately 7.31 acres. The remaining 19,713 square feet of alley will include stormwater BMPs, comprised of native vine and tree plantings, and porous pavement. The green alley network in total will capture runoff and percolate at least 1,890,000 gallons of stormwater per year.

This project is being brought back to the board today under a new grant number because of a delay in the initiation of the project and a change in the expected performance end date. This grant agreement was never executed.

### **The Community Center at DeForest Park (RMC 18012)**

In order to bring about positive changes to DeForest Park in North Long Beach, its wetlands, and the greater LLAR Region, the Conservation of Long Beach (CCLB) will develop a master plan for the entire DeForest Park, as well as design and install a satellite site at the DeForest Wetlands to better serve the needs of the LLAR while training youth as river stewards. By implementing a satellite site, CCLB will not only be able to oversee the master plan as it is carried out, but more importantly, have the resources to carry out necessary functions to sustain the health and vitality of the LLAR and its surrounding communities in the long term. During construction, the satellite site will function as a Lower LA River restoration center and crew training location.

Although the majority of the outreach has been conducted, public engagement was scheduled to continue throughout July 2020. Goal is to continue the vision plan development and have it on City Council's agenda in July 2020.

### **LA River Environmental Flows Study Supplemental Analysis (RMC 18013)**

The Supplemental Analysis has one overarching goal: To expand the currently funded Los Angeles River Environmental Flows Study to include analysis of potential recreation and wildlife impacts to the Lower Los Angeles River. The ultimate outcome of the Supplemental Analysis is to provide technically sound recommendations and alternatives to the Water Boards for consideration and implementation of a water flow standard that takes into consideration the existing and planned recreation and habitat uses of the Los Angeles River.

RMC finalized a Conservancy Agreement with Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to move this project forward. WCA is currently negotiating a contract with SCCWRP to fund the supplemental scope.

## **WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY ACTIVITIES**

**Duck Farm Project:** Construction work continues with the timeline to complete expected to be extended through March 2020 for the General Contractor. The extended timeline is primarily due to SCE having not yet completed the undergrounding of their existing above ground facilities and their removal of the above ground facilities. This work is necessary to allow for final grading and planting in the upper riparian and meadows areas to be completed. SCE's has indicated that they will finish their work this month, which is critical in order to allow the project to finish final soil prep, irrigation

and planting in the upper riparian bioswale and meadow areas in February and March. In the interim, work on the construction of the dry streambed is scheduled to continue and be completed by end of Spring 2020.

Concrete curbs, seat walls (including the east entry park, west side plaza and outdoor classroom areas), and walkways have been constructed in both the east entry park area, west plaza, and overlook areas. Other work scheduled to be completed by the end of this month includes the seat walls at the overlook, installation of restroom facility finish surfaces, electrical and plumbing fixtures and tree plantings.

Decorative and Structural metal work is in fabrication and should be targeted for installation in Spring 2020.

Conservation Corps work to plant 4" potted natives along the pathways and installation of mulch will complete later this Spring. However, completion of this work is also dependent on SCE removal of their poles and overhead wires. Parking lot and entry drive has been partially constructed with final paving to be laid at the end of the project in March to ensure it is not damaged during the remaining construction work.



*Entry pocket park path and seat walls to tunnel*



*East entry trail from pocket park heading*



*New concrete path placed at west-side park plaza*



*Seating at outdoor classroom*



*New restroom 'kit' facility takes shape*

**Duck Farm House Landscape and Water Project:** WCA is also moving 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 Regional 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. The Farmhouse will be renovated and transformed into a community resource / visitor center to compliment these conservation gardens and provide additional programming opportunities.*

**San Gabriel Valley Greenway Network:** LACFCD has engaged Brown and Caldwell as the prime consultant to prepare the plan with WCA to participate in project planning and strategic planning/technical advisory meetings over the next two years. No additional work orders have been requested at this time; however, WCA expects at a minimum to participate in reviews of technical

documents prepared by the consultants and to perform up to four additional community engagement meetings during the development of the plan. The consultant is on track to complete their initial study and existing conditions report by the end of January. WCA anticipates attending a review meeting to receive the data and study results in February or March.

**Emerald Necklace:** WCA attended the January Emerald Necklace Meetings hosted by Los Angeles County District 1 Supervisor Hilda Solis to provide an update on the Duck Farm River Park and Community Center and River walk projects. The meeting brings together staff from the Supervisor’s office, various Los Angeles County departments and non-profit partners to collaborate on projects to forward the greenway plan. LA County Department of Public Works is forwarding both the San Jose Bridge and River Trail that will connect San Jose Creek trail to the San Gabriel River’s eastern bank up to the Duck Farm River Park and Rosemead Blvd complete street project between Legg Lake and Durfee within the Whittier Narrows Recreation Area. Early implementation projects from the San Gabriel Valley Greenway plan being spearheaded by LA County Flood Control District includes planning and community outreach for the proposed Puente Creek greenway. There will be a special Emerald Necklace Strategic Planning Meeting on February 5<sup>th</sup> sponsored by LA County Parks and Recreation.

# 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 waterways, the San Gabriel River and the Rio Hondo. Phase I's 16 projects will close gaps in this regional recreational trails 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 purpose of this trail is to create a continuous loop around the Emerald Necklace development, including an access point to the Rio Hondo. The route will be developed in phases, with the Emerald Necklace segment as the first phase.

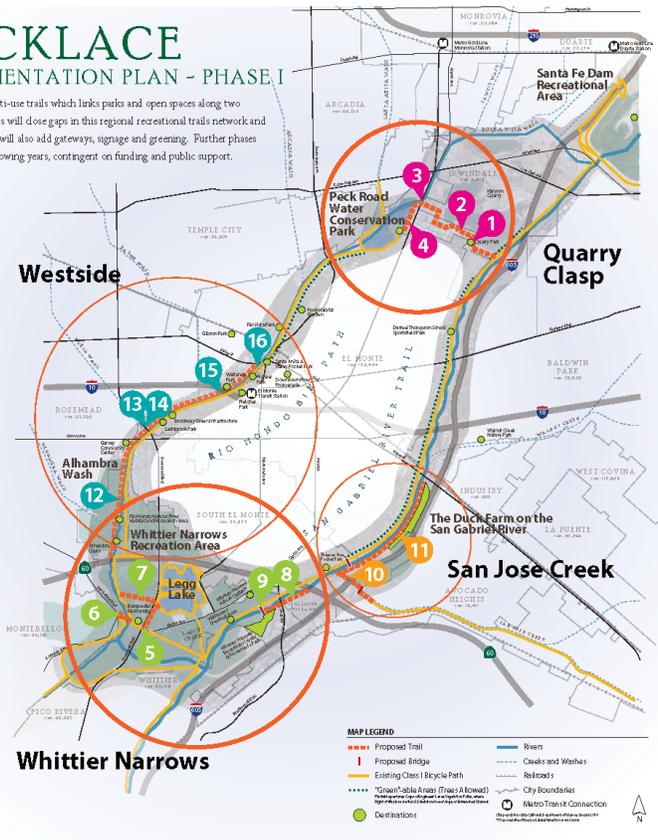
- 12 Multi-Use Trail: Alhambra Wash from State Highway 60 to the Gateway Community Center with Gates, Signage, etc.
- 13 Underpass at Rosemead Blvd.
- 14 Street Access Ramps at Rosemead Blvd. with Gates & Signage
- 15 Freeway Underpass Improvements
- 16 Multi-Use Trail: Rosemead Blvd. to Valley Blvd.

### Whittier Narrows Connectivity: Linking Existing Park Resources

This section identifies the location and type of the multi-use trails projects and Class I bicycle paths segments and connects the trail network to existing park resources in the Whittier Narrows Recreation Area.

- 5 Class I Bicycle Path: Adjacent to Rosemead Blvd. to Legg Lake
- 6 Class I Bicycle Path: From El Bosque 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 Legg Lake through the Southern California Edison Easement
- 8 Multi-Use Trail: Pullman Village from State Highway 60 to Horseman's Park
- 9 Multi-Use Bridge: Pullman Bridge at Horseman's Park

### PROJECT COMPONENTS



### Quarry Clasp: Completing the Loop

With the final completion of the Peck Road Water Conservation Park segment in the San Gabriel Valley, the Emerald Necklace will be a continuous loop around the Rio Hondo and San Gabriel River.

- 1 Park Development with Trail, Gates, Signage and Amenities
- 2 Multi-Use Trail and Bike Paths
- 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 segment will provide a key connection between the Emerald Necklace and the San Gabriel River, providing access to the Duck Farm on the San Gabriel River.

- 10 Multi-Use Trail and 2 Multi-Use 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:** On September 12, 2019, the WCA Board approved the negotiation of a consultant contract for a regional biological report. On October 15, 2019, an RFP for a regional biological report RFP was posted to the WCA website and distributed to biological consultants with extensive field experience in the San Gabriel Mountains foothills. Four submissions were received.

The proposals were evaluated by a jury that included WCA staff and two biologists. Evaluation criteria included: understanding of overall concepts and objectives, technical approach for providing requested and optional services, qualifications of personnel assigned to the project, record of field work and insight based on references and submitted work samples, and insight into specific opportunities in WCA territory.

The proposal submitted by Psomas received the highest score. Psomas' work sample demonstrated solid field experience in the project area, and application of this knowledge at the scale of regional analysis as well as in local management recommendations.

Jurors emphasized that WCA should seek to engage biologists to field truth parcels recommended by the selected consultant before a final prioritization.

A study on human factors currently in progress. Dr. Milburn was engaged to interview municipalities and conservancies in WCA territory about open space maintenance issues, and opportunities related to access and low-impact recreational uses of open space lands. Due to unforeseen circumstances, this study has been delayed.

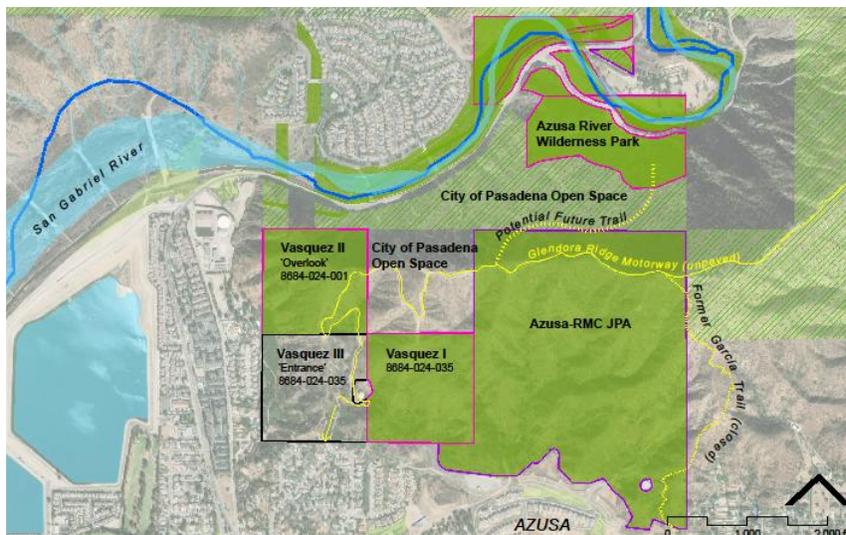
San Gabriel Mountains and Foothills Open Space Acquisition Master Plan included funds for acquisition activities. WCA has begun due diligence and strategizing for the acquisition of several San Gabriel River Canyon floodplain properties of significance to wildlife habitat.

WCA awaits Conservation Easement documents from San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy (SGMRC) for review to complete the transfer of Easley Canyon to WCA.

*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.*

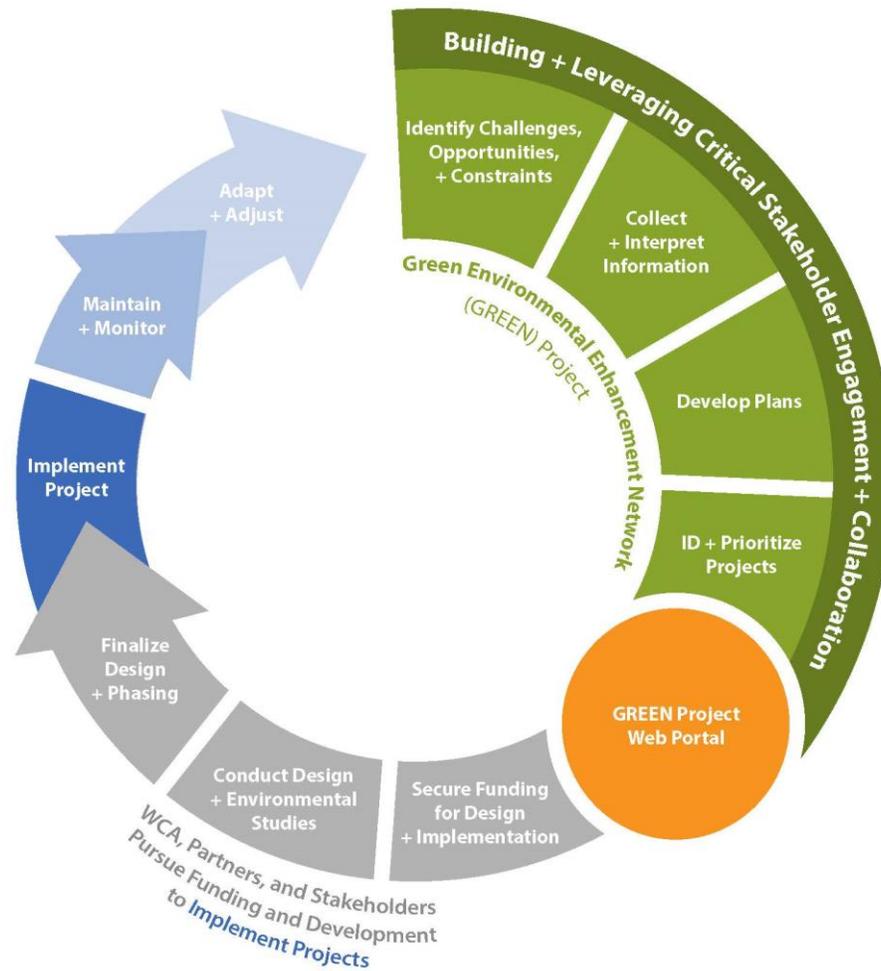
**Vasquez Habitat and Open Space:** The WCA received a grant award from the RMC's Proposition 68 program in November to acquire the parcel known as Vasquez Overlook (Vasquez II). Staff completed all due diligence activities in December and as a result the Vasquez Overlook property is currently in escrow with expected closing date before the end of this month. The purchase and sales agreement for Vasquez Overlook includes an 18-month Exclusive Negotiating Agreement (ENA) for the purchase of the Vasquez Access parcel [AIN 8684-024-035] (Vasquez III).

A Memorandum of Understanding/Management Agreement is on today's agenda for consideration to ratify. The agreement allows the Vasquez family, as caretakers, to continue their tradition of maintaining a U.S. Flag on the property in honor of our veterans, as well as maintain the overlook called Art and Chema's landing.



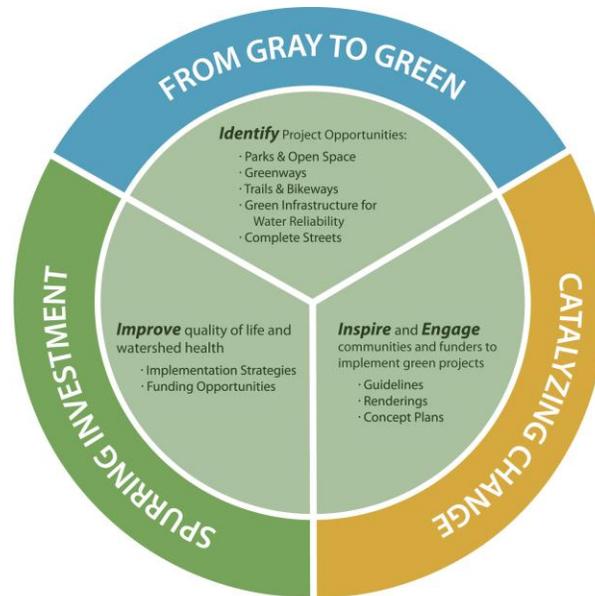
**GREEN Project:** The GREEN project is a multipart effort by the agency to promote urban greening in the WCA / RMC territory. WCA has begun discussions around development of a pilot Portal focused on the WCA/RMC territory or taking a County-wide approach for a regional depository of plans and projects, as well as, a project and funding match tool. The grant requires administrative extension for time to assemble a software development team capable of completing the desired functionality for the website and online tools.

The software development tasks will be part of a Phase II grant amendment or separate funding depending on the investment needed to complete the work.



*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:** Staff are currently drafting and uploading written and visual content to the Gateway Greening website. Lyric Design & Planning are currently developing Greenscape maps and City Profile pages as WCA staff works to close out a grant from Strategic Growth Council. WCA staff are continuing to develop the Gateway Greening website with a grant from RMC through April 2020.



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 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:** Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy returned the joint agreement with Rivers and Mountains Conservancy this month. Once this conservancy agreement is fully executed, WCA can begin to forward the study. Staff will finalize the consultant contract with the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project and begin the study which will include water quality indicators and potential for the Rio Hondo and Compton Creek to serve as mitigation areas.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> of 4 LA River Flows Stakeholder Working Group was held on March 26, 2020.

*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. Including the WCA as part of the Stakeholder group and adding a third-party review of the analysis itself. For more information, please visit the project website: [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/larflows.html](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/larflows.html)*

**Mt Baldy Wilderness Preserve:** Unsuccessful in securing a Prop A Excess Funds grant for small property improvements, staff is collaborating with the San Gabriel Valley Conservation Corps staff to develop a Youth training program in natural resource maintenance and stewardship for the property. The competitive grant application will be submitted by SGVCC to Regional Parks and Open Space Districts call for Measure A projects which are due in February. The program will utilize the site as a satellite training location for the corps to be trained and have hands on experience in trail maintenance, arborist, small structure repair, exotic plant removal and native plant restoration and maintenance. Additionally, nature-based solutions and community engagement/stewardship

will be integrated into the training content of the program. Partnership with the Forest Service may also be a component with those discussions to follow.

The utilization of Mt Baldy property as a Corps training site will benefit the property by providing both an active onsite presence and regular maintenance which will help to reduce negative activities such as graffiti and vandalism of trail amenities. Upon close-out of the Measure A grant, if awarded, the property will be eligible to receive Operations and Maintenance funding that will provide much needed operational cost relief to the Authority.

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

**Crystal Lake Redevelopment and San Gabriel Canyon Master Planning:** The U.S. Forest Service Master Agreement has a finite life of 5 years with an end date of June 30, 2020. Funds deposited by USFS for work must be expended by that deadline or they are lost. WCA staff, working with USFS and Consultant, have identified priority projects to complete over the next 6 months while closing out the planning side of the effort in favor of design and implementation.

These priority implementation projects include the design and construction of all new camp host sites, kiosks and iron rangers at both Crystal Lake and Coldbrook campgrounds. As well as, planned improvements to the Crystal Lake Visitor Center and installation of a trash transfer station at Rincon Fire Station site. Pending approval of Federal clearances, USFS has identified the demolition of several old, unused restrooms and dilapidated ancillary buildings. These improvements will be a noticeable and welcome enhancement to the visitor experience.

All work is funded through the existing Participating Agreement between the USFS and the WCA. The workplan for this and additional work is being developed cooperatively with USFS. Further details will be shared as these joint projects are developed and finalized with USFS.

*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.*

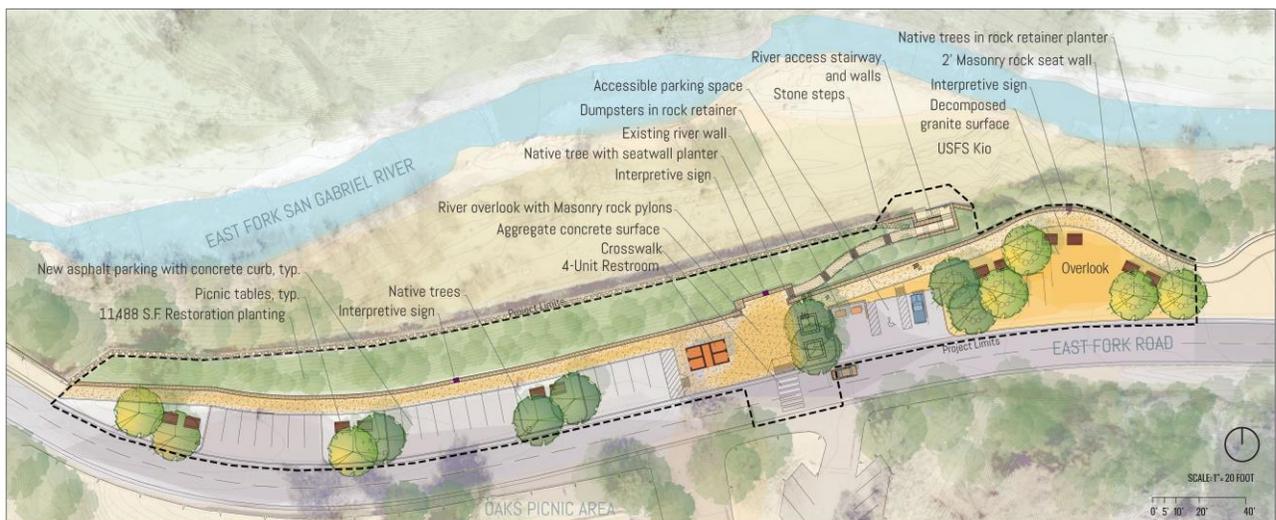
**River Wilderness Park:** In anticipation of filling funding gaps with Prop 68 grants, WCA extended the performance period of several existing grants to align with a new target of project completion by 2021. Staff continues to work with City of Azusa, Caltrans and Design team to complete the design for the overlook and park entry improvement elements of the park. WCA also continues to advocate for Caltrans to develop the roundabout but will develop the park in its absence in order to prevent further delays.



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 Oaks River Access Project. At the November 2019 Board Meeting, the WCA Board authorized an amendment to BlueGreen’s contract to extend the footprint of the design with funding through WCA’s Master Participating Agreement with the Forest Service. At RMC’s June 2019 Board Meeting, the RMC Board approved a partial Prop 1 grant to fund the permitting and bid/award process for the project. WCA is currently awaiting a decision Prop 68 funding from the RMC for the construction of the project.

U.S. Forest Service anticipates making a decision of record on the EIS for the project in early 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 Construction continues on the Parque Dos Rios project with completion of the overlook and entry gate rockwork columns completed. Decorative metalwork railings, shade structure and gates are in fabrication. Interpretive signage and dedication sign artwork is complete. A second overlook location to view cliff swallows under the Imperial Highway bridge was identified and a drawing to construct is being readied to submit to LA County Flood Control District for approval to construct within their Right of Way. Both the overlooks will feature seating, interpretive panels and viewsopes as amenities. A grant extension from Regional Parks and Open Space District is being processed to allow for the addition of this additional overlook and to align the Prop A grant completion date with the work being completed under the Conservation Corps of Long Beach's Prop 68 grant. The structural work is anticipated to be completed by the end of January and the CCLB landscaping work by April pending timely amended approval by LACFCD for the second overlook location. WCA staff applied for the Measure W program's December call for projects to perform a feasibility to redesign the Caltrans drainage V-ditch to a nature based riparian bioswale and has been asked to present the project to the Watershed Study Area Committee in March.

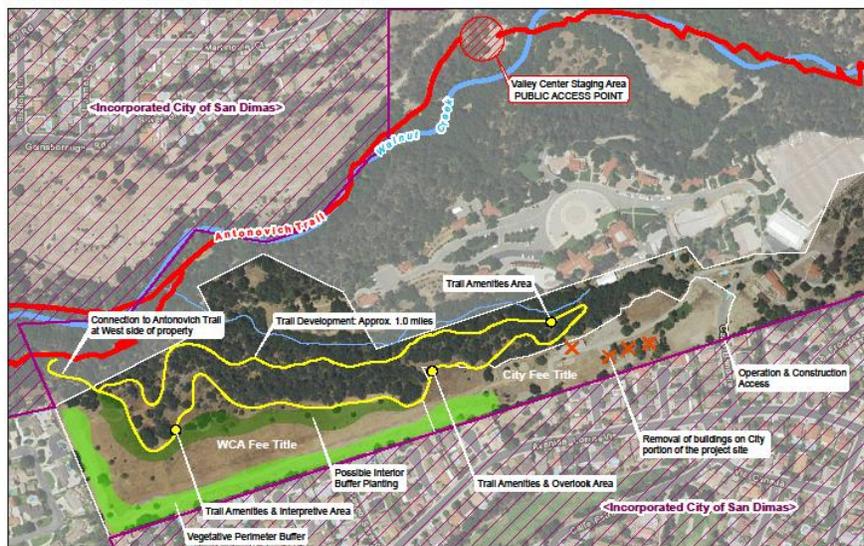




Parque Dos Rios is a 7.8-acre site situated along the Lower Los Angeles River (LLAR) at the confluence with the Rio Hondo in the City of South Gate. The project will create a bike stop amenity for the LLAR trail, with overlook, shade structure, seating and interpretive graphics. The land will be planted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

**Walnut Creek Habitat & Open Space:** WCA staff, the City of San Dimas, BlueGreen landscape design and the City’s selected construction contractor met at the end of 2019 for a construction kickoff meeting. Construction is expected to be complete by Spring 2020.

**WALNUT CREEK – WEST PHASE ONLY**



Acquired in 2008, the Walnut Creek Habitat and Open Space Property is a total of approx. 60.8 acres. The location is 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.

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 site clean-up, trail development and amenities (interpretive signage, benches, etc.) for a looped spur trail, habitat enhancements, and

*the planting of a vegetated buffer for neighbors and connect to the Antonovich Trail via County-operated trail staging areas.*

**River Ranger Program Implementation Project:** WCA received the executed grant agreement from RMC. Due to current staffing limitations and timeliness of delivering a pilot program by Summary 2020, there may be the need to supplement staff with consultants to deliver the program, complete agreement and perform on-going community outreach.

*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. The Los Angeles River Ranger Program Establishment Plan was finalized in June 2019 and the program is moving toward a pilot project this summer.*