

Meeting Notes

Los Angeles County Flood Control District
Maintenance of Soft-Bottom Channels

Waste Discharge Requirements
Order No. R4-2015-0032

Working Group Meeting #1

April 2, 2015

On February 12, 2015, the Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LACFCD) requested a new 5-year term Waste Discharge Requirements (WDR) permit from the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) for maintenance of its soft-bottom channels (SBC). The RWQCB approved a one-year WDR permit.

RWQCB requested working group meetings to discuss LACFCD operations and to receive input and feedback from stakeholders. The first of seven meetings was held on April 2, 2015.

Some of the highlights of the April 2, 2015, meeting are listed below:

- During the 1997-99 SBC permitting, LACFCD coordinated with California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), RWQCB, and the US Army Corps of Engineers to develop a vegetation clearing plan in anticipation of the El Nino storms. About 48.2 acres of vegetation out of the 203 acres of vegetation were permitted to be cleared within the original 100 SBC Reaches.
- LACFCD follows the guidelines of the USACE's Operations and Maintenance Manual (O+M) to maintain all of its channels and levees built by USACE and transferred to LACFCD. USACE inspects levees about every 5 years.
- LACFCD follows vegetation management policy on levees per Engineering Technical Letter (ETL) 1110-2-583. According to this document no vegetation is allowed on the crest of the levee, the riverside and landside embankments, and within 15 feet from the toe of the levee on either side (riverside and landside). The vegetation clearing is conducted to primarily ensure structural integrity of the levees and to maintain channel flood capacity.
- The channels and levees were designed and constructed in the 1940s by the USACE. Vegetation and/or vegetation planting were not incorporated into the design and construction of these levees.

- The levees at the LACFCD-maintained portion of Compton Creek (from 91 Freeway down to the confluence with LA River) could not be certified since it could not meet FEMA's criteria. Even with Compton Creek cleared of all vegetation, it still could not be able to handle a 100-year flood.
- FEMA's new flood zone map for the Compton Creek area is scheduled to be released in early 2016.
- Levees at lower Los Angeles River were certified for a 133-year flood under the Los Angeles County Drainage Area (LACDA) project.
- LACFCD discusses and comments on FEMA's analysis, findings, and proposed changes to its flood zone maps before they are finalized. FEMA is the only agency authorized to develop Federal Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) -- flood zone maps.
- LACFCD has data on its rain gages and a number of stream gages going back a number of years and decades.
- LACFCD designs and constructs multi-beneficial projects that capture and conserve stormwater. Such captured waters, in addition to some reclaimed waters from sewage treatment plants, are used to recharge the groundwater supplies.
- LACFCD incorporates projects, such as walk/bicycle paths to enhance the recreational activities and aesthetics along its right of ways. LACFCD acknowledges SB 1201 and continues to seek opportunities to enhance its right-of ways.

USACE comments:

- The USACE uses similar maintenance standards as LACFCD to maintain channels and levees under its purview, such as at the upper LA River (Glendale Narrows).
- LA River at Glendale Narrows has many trees and vegetation because USACE did not have the funding to remove them and over a long period of time they grew to be what they are today.
- There are multiple agencies and jurisdictions, not just USACE, who maintain and manage the landscaping and other recreational improvements within the USACE maintained reaches.
- The original USACE levee designs assumed clear channel conditions.

- One attendee mentioned that it was because of pressure from Supervisor Yaroslavsky's office and City of Los Angeles about 20 years ago that made USACE not remove vegetation at Glendale Narrow.

General Information:

- The following documents are available on:
<http://dpw.lacounty.gov/LACFCD/WDR/workgroup.aspx>
 - Copy of PowerPoint Presentation
 - USACE-approved Operations & Maintenance Manual
 - USACE – ETL 1110-2-583: Guidelines for vegetation plantings and management at levees
 - Los Angeles County Drainage Area (LACDA) Study – Upper Los Angeles River & Tujunga Wash Hydraulic Models (July 2005)
- Hydraulic analysis and modeling will be discussed during Working Group Meeting #2 on April 16.

Action Items:

- Do USACE and LACFCD use the same hydraulic modeling methods? Is the modeling done by LACFCD integrated into one system with those of USACE or FEMA? *To be discussed at the 4/16/2015, meeting.*
- What are the impacts of the Integrated Resources Watershed Management Plans (IRWMPs) and Enhanced Watershed Management Plans (EWMPs) on flood reduction? *To be discussed in a future meeting.*
- Status of USACE maintained upper LA River / Arbor Study reaches to meet design flood protection and to handle the 100-year flood? *To be discussed in a future meeting.*
- Status of the landslide vegetation on the Los Angeles River and Dominquez west side basin. *To be discussed at the 5/20/2015 meeting.*
- Does LACFCD have a treatment program after removal of Arundo? *To be discussed at the 4/16/2015, meeting.*
- What reaches of Los Angeles River have less than 100 year flood protection? *To be discussed in a future meeting.*

- What is the status of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) study to evaluate the levee vegetation policy? *To be discussed in a future meeting.*
- What other restoration type projects are being considered? *To be discussed in a future meeting.*