

Section 2

Introduction

2.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The San Gabriel River extends from the Angeles National Forest through 19 cities and unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County and Orange County to the Pacific Ocean. Engineered modifications currently present along the San Gabriel River provide flood protection for surrounding urban development. These modifications have also allowed development almost to the San Gabriel River's edge, decreasing open space and altering natural habitats. In order to address conditions along the San Gabriel River, the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors passed a resolution in 1999 instructing the Department of Public Works (LADPW) to prepare a San Gabriel River Corridor Master Plan (Master Plan) for Board approval, with the assistance of the Department of Regional Planning, Department of Parks and Recreation, and the National Park Service (NPS) (Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program). To develop the Master Plan, LADPW established a Steering Committee composed of a broad range of stakeholders, including: cities along the river; water and regulatory agencies; interested community, business, and environmental groups; and other interested individuals (see **Table 2-1**). The Steering Committee is open to the public, and members have met more than 40 times over the past 4 years. In addition to the Steering Committee, a Planning Committee consisting of Los Angeles County, San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC), and NPS staff meets monthly.

The Master Plan is a consensus-based document that will recognize and address a renewed interest in recreation, open space, and habitat, while also seeking to enhance and maintain flood protection, provide water conservation benefits, and preserve existing water rights. The Master Plan integrates over 130 projects along the San Gabriel River proposed by cities and other stakeholder organizations. The Steering Committee has selected five of these projects ("Concept Design Studies") to demonstrate how project planning can simultaneously address the Master Plan goals of habitat, recreation, and open space (see **Section 3**).

In 2003, LADPW and RMC formed a Joint Powers Authority known as the Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA) – that will seek to fund projects of mutual interest and facilitate work. RMC is one of the seven conservancies of the California Resources Agency, and its legislated mandate is to preserve urban open space and habitat within the San Gabriel and Los Angeles River Watersheds. The WCA will consider acquisition and protection of lands for watershed protection, conservation, natural open space, and recreational purposes. LADPW will also pursue projects on its properties along the San Gabriel River, focusing on those related to flood management, water quality and conservation, and groundwater recharge.

**Table 2-1
Organizations Involved in
the San Gabriel River Corridor Master Plan Steering Committee to Date**

<p>Federal Government National Park Service-Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Los Angeles District U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service U.S. Forest Service - Angeles National Forest</p> <p>State Government California Department of Fish and Game California Department of Health Services California Department of Parks and Recreation California Department of Transportation California Department of Water Resources California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region California State Parks San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy</p> <p>County/Regional Governments County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation County of Los Angeles Department of Health Services County of Los Angeles Sheriff's Department County of Orange County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County Gateway Cities Council of Governments Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority Puente Hills Landfill Native Habitat Preservation Authority San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments San Gabriel Valley Mosquito & Vector Control District</p> <p>Water Districts / Agencies Central Basin Municipal Water District Main San Gabriel Basin Watermaster Metropolitan Water District of Southern California San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District San Gabriel River Watermaster Three Valleys Municipal Water District Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District Water Replenishment District of Southern California West Basin Municipal Water District</p> <p>Interested Businesses Aera Energy California American Water Company Hanson Aggregates West Southern California Edison Company United Rock Products Corporation Vulcan Materials</p> <p>Organizations Amigos de los Rios American Society of Landscape Architects Audubon Society Azusa Canyon Off Roaders Association California Exotic Pest Control California Off-Road Vehicles Association Downey Fly Fishers Equestrian Trails Incorporated Fisheries Resource Volunteer Corps Fly Fishers Club of Orange County Friends of Pio Pico State Historic Park Friends of the San Gabriel River Inland Valley Land Trust Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council Los Angeles City Bicycle Coalition</p>	<p>Board of Supervisors County of Los Angeles Supervisor Michael Antonovich County of Los Angeles Supervisor Don Knabe County of Los Angeles Supervisor Gloria Molina County of Orange Supervisor James Silva</p> <p>Political Representatives US Senator Barbara Boxer US Senator Dianne Feinstein California State Senator John Campbell California State Senator Martha Escutia California State Senator Alan Lowenthal California State Senator Bob Margett California State Senator Gloria Romero Congressman David Dreier Congresswoman Grace Napolitano Congressman Dana Rohrabacher Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard Congressman Edward Royce Congresswoman Linda Sanchez Congresswoman Hilda Solis Assemblymember Rudy Bermudez Assemblymember Ronald Calderon Assemblymember Ed Chavez Assemblymember Judy Chu Assemblymember Hector De La Torre Assemblymember Tom Harman Assemblymember Bob Huff Assemblymember Betty Karnette Assemblymember Carol Liu Assemblymember Dennis Mountjoy Assemblymember Jenny Oropeza</p> <p>Cities City of Arcadia City of Azusa City of Baldwin Park City of Bellflower City of Cerritos City of Downey City of Duarte City of El Monte City of Industry City of Irwindale City of Lakewood City of Long Beach City of Los Alamitos City of Monrovia City of Norwalk City of Pico Rivera City of Rosemead City of Santa Fe Springs City of Seal Beach City of South El Monte City of Whittier</p> <p>Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition Los Cerritos Wetlands Task Force North East Trees Public Lands for the People Riverlands Preservation Trust of the Rio San Gabriel (RIO Trust) San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy San Gabriel River Water Committee San Gabriel Valley Conservation Corps San Gabriel Valley Gun Club San Gabriel Valley Protective Association San Gabriel Valley Water Association Sierra Club South Coast Wildlands Project Southeast Water Coalition Surfrider Foundation Trust for Public Land</p>
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2.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Steering Committee and LADPW developed a vision statement and a set of broad goals. As defined by the San Gabriel River Corridor Master Plan Steering Committee, the vision for the project is:

The San Gabriel River will be the corridor of an integrated watershed system while providing protection, benefit and enjoyment to the public.

The following goals of the Master Plan support the vision for the San Gabriel River:

1. Habitat: Preserve and enhance habitat systems through public education, connectivity, and balance with other uses.
2. Recreation: Encourage and enhance safe and diverse recreation systems, while providing for expansion, equitable and sufficient access, balance, and multi-purpose uses.
3. Open Space: Enhance and protect open space systems through conservation, aesthetics, connectivity, stewardship, and multi-purpose uses.
4. Flood Protection: Maintain flood protection and existing water and other rights while enhancing flood management activities through the integration with recreation, open space, and habitat systems.
5. Water Supply and Water Quality: Maintain existing water and other rights while enhancing water quality, water supply, groundwater recharge, and water conservation through the integration with recreation, open space, and habitat systems.
6. Economic Development: Pursue economic development opportunities derived from and compatible with the natural aesthetic and environmental qualities of the river.

Pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15124, these goals also serve as the CEQA project objectives for the Master Plan.

2.3 PURPOSE OF THE EIR

2.3.1 CEQA Requirements

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), discretionary decisions by public agencies regarding certain public and private projects are subject to environmental review. The proposed Master Plan must comply with CEQA because it is a “project” as defined by Section 15378 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

This Program Environmental Impact Report (Program EIR) has been prepared by LADPW in compliance with the CEQA Statutes (Public Resources Code Section 21000 *et. seq.*) and the State CEQA Guidelines (Title 14, California Code of Regulations Section 15000 *et. seq.*) as amended.

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The purpose of this Program EIR is: 1) to fully disclose to the project's decision-makers, responsible agencies, interested parties, and the general public the significant or potentially significant environmental effects of implementing the proposed project; 2) to identify possible ways to avoid or reduce those impacts; and 3) to describe reasonable alternatives to the proposed project.

2.3.2 Program EIR Approach

The Master Plan is a set of policies and actions to increase open space, habitat, and recreation opportunities in the San Gabriel River corridor. Pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines Section 15168, this document has been prepared as a Program EIR to consider the environmental impacts, mitigation measures and alternatives of the proposed Master Plan as a whole. This approach avoids duplication, allows the lead agency to consider broad policy alternatives and mitigation measures at an earlier time when there may be more flexibility to address the issues, and addresses cumulative impacts that might be overlooked in a project-level EIR.

Because this document is a Program EIR, it generally contains less detail than typical development project EIRs. For the most part, specific sites and/or construction and operation plans have not been determined. The level of detail in the impact analysis reflects the level of detail in the project description. Based on the conceptual designs described in the Master Plan, more detailed description is provided for the two County sponsored Concept Design Studies (San Gabriel Canyon Spreading Grounds and Lario Creek) and three others (Woodland Duck Farm, El Dorado Regional Park, and San Gabriel River Discovery Center at Whittier Narrows).

However, since the project descriptions for the Concept Design Studies are conceptual and not approved plans, this EIR is not meant to be a project-level review of the Concept Design Studies, but instead analyzes their impacts (as best as can be determined at this preliminary stage in their design) as examples of Master Plan projects and the types of impacts expected. For each of these sites, the actual planning process by project sponsors still needs to be carried out or is ongoing, including appropriate public involvement and environmental review. As the Concept Design Studies or other future Master Plan projects are proposed for implementation, project proponents will prepare a second-tier CEQA document (a Negative Declaration or an EIR) for each project. The data on existing conditions, CEQA thresholds of significance, and the programmatic analyses and mitigation measures presented in this Program EIR will then serve as a source of background information and model to guide further project-level CEQA review for the Concept Design Studies, or other Master Plan projects. This document is intended to streamline the environmental review and documentation process for Steering Committee members proposing projects in the river corridor.

2.4 AGENCIES AND APPROVALS

2.4.1 Lead Agency

The County of Los Angeles is the lead agency pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15367 for this Program EIR. A lead agency is the public agency that has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project subject to CEQA. The lead agency is

responsible for preparing the environmental documents on a project according to the full disclosure requirements of CEQA.

LADPW, a department of the County of Los Angeles and the department responsible for carrying out the Master Plan, is a public agency responsible for the design, construction, operation, maintenance, and repair of specific roads, bridges, airports, sewers, water supply, flood control, and water conservation facilities within Los Angeles County including San Gabriel River Watershed. In August 2000, a new Watershed Management Division was created within LADPW to integrate and coordinate activities that affect the natural resources and water quality of the watersheds within the County. Services that were brought together under the Watershed Management Division include flood protection, water conservation, preserving and creating open space for recreation and habitat, and reducing pollution of water resources.

2.4.2 Responsible Agencies and Approvals

Under CEQA, a responsible agency is a public agency, other than the lead agency, which has responsibility for implementing or approving a project. A responsible agency typically has permitting authority or approval over some aspect of a proposed project. The responsible agency relies on the lead agency's environmental document in acting on whatever aspect of the project requires its approval. The lead agency is required to consult with responsible agencies and solicit comments from them regarding the choice and content of the environmental document.

Table 2-2 presents the range of permits and approvals that may be required when implementing the individual projects proposed by cities and other stakeholder organizations participating in the Master Plan process. For any specific project, only a subset of these permits and approvals will likely apply. Responsible agencies expected to review the Program EIR and may issue permits or approvals for future projects in the Master Planning area are summarized in **Table 2-2**.

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**Table 2-2
List of Permits, Approvals, and Coordination Potentially Relevant to
Future Projects in the Master Planning Area**

Agency	Potential Permits or Approvals (Relevant Activities)
Federal Agencies	
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean Water Act Section 404 permit (For river channel modifications or maintenance of created wetlands)
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal Endangered Species Act Section 10(a) coordination (If federal threatened or endangered species are found during future onsite biological surveys, or if created wetlands or other habitat features attract threatened or endangered species and coverage is necessary for routine maintenance activities) Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation for projects involving federal action (e.g., funding)
U.S. Forest Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special Use Permit (For construction of projects on Forest Service lands proposed by other parties)
Federal Emergency Management Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modifications to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) floodplain maps (For flood channel enhancement projects that propose modifications to an existing flood control channel)
State Agencies	
California Department of Conservation Division of Oil, Gas, & Geothermal Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of oil and gas well records Implementation of construction site review and well abandonment procedures
California Department of Fish and Game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State Endangered Species Act coordination (If state threatened or endangered species are found during future onsite biological surveys, or if created wetlands or other habitat features attract threatened or endangered species and coverage is necessary for routine maintenance activities) Section 1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement (For river channel modifications and on-going maintenance activities in channels (e.g., Lario Creek))
California Department of Health Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project review (For water features in parks or reuse of stormwater for irrigation)
California Department of Parks and Recreation, Los Angeles District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project review Potential funding partner
California Department of Transportation, District 7 (Los Angeles County) or District 12 (Orange County)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encroachment permit (For projects located within the Department of Transportation rights-of-way, e.g., adjacent to freeways). Note – requires conformance to Caltrans' Standard Plans and Standard Specifications for water pollution control. Transportation permit for transportation of heavy construction equipment and/or materials which requires the use of oversized-transport vehicles on State highways

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Agency	Potential Permits or Approvals (Relevant Activities)
California Department of Water Resources, Division of Safety of Dams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval of designs of bermed retention basins (For projects involving large stormwater retention basins or other water storage facilities)
California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification or Waiver (For projects requiring a Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) NPDES permits or waste discharge requirements (For projects involving dewatering activities during construction) NPDES Stormwater Program permit (For construction sites over 1 acre)
Coastal Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coastal Development Permits for projects that involve placement of structures or major vegetation removal in the Coastal Zone
Regional Agencies	
South Coast Air Quality Management District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permits for temporary electric generation at construction sites, if applicable Rule 403 Fugitive Dust notification or plan (For construction sites greater than 100 acres)
Main San Gabriel Basin Watermaster Metropolitan Water District of Southern California San Gabriel River Watermaster San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District Three Valleys Metropolitan Water District Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District Water Replenishment District of Southern California West Basin Municipal Water District Central Basin Municipal Water District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project review
Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District Orange County Vector Control District San Gabriel Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District City of Long Beach Vector Control Program Los Angeles County Vector Management Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project review (For projects that contain standing water features)
Puente Hills Landfill Native Habitat Preservation Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project review (For projects that are located within the Authority's jurisdiction)
School Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval of projects involving public school sites
County and City Agencies	
Local municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land use approvals including Conditional Use Permits, architectural reviews, building permits, and grading permits Easements, encroachment permits, and/or construction permits Coastal Development Permit or Coastal Exemption for construction projects within the Coastal Zone (cities of Long Beach and Seal Beach, California Coastal Commission (State Agency))
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encroachment permit (For projects located within MTA rights-of-way, e.g., adjacent to railroads)

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Agency	Potential Permits or Approvals (Relevant Activities)
County of Orange	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of channel modifications proposed for District facilities• Encroachment permit
Los Angeles County, Orange County, or City of Long Beach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incorporation of stormwater BMPs into projects as outlined by SUSMP (LADPW, 2002b), DAMP (Orange County, 2003), or Long Beach Stormwater Management Program (City of Long Beach, 2001), as applicable
County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approval to construct within or over a Districts' sewer / sewer easement
Southern California Edison (SCE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project review and approval for projects within SCE right-of-way

2.5 EIR PROCESS

2.5.1 Notice of Preparation

The Notice of Preparation (NOP) for this Program EIR was filed by LADPW with the State Clearinghouse in April 2003, and distributed to responsible agencies and interested parties for a 30-day review and comment period ending May 28, 2003. A copy of the NOP is included as **Appendix B**.

LADPW received 21 comment letters on the NOP. CEQA related comments were also received during the CEQA scoping meeting held at LADPW offices in Alhambra on May 12, 2003. The written comments submitted on the NOP and comments provided at the CEQA scoping meeting are presented in **Appendix B**. The comments received related to surface and ground water quality, flood control, water rights, mineral resources, construction impacts on utilities, traffic/transportation facilities, and recreational facilities (e.g., bike trails), and impact on public health (creation of habitat for mosquito and other vectors).

2.5.2 Draft and Final Program EIR

The Draft Program EIR for the Master Plan was issued for public review on March 7, 2005. The Notice of Availability (NOA) and the Draft Program EIR were mailed to a total of 72 agencies, organizations, and interested individuals. In addition, the NOA was sent to over 200 individuals by e-mail. The NOA was filed with the County Clerks of Los Angeles County and Orange County for public posting, and the Notice of Completion, NOA, and the Draft Program EIR were submitted to the State Clearinghouse. Copies of the Draft Program EIR were made available for public review at the LADPW office in Alhambra, 19 local and area libraries, and on the Master Plan website. The public review and comment period lasted for 60 days from March 7 through May 5, 2005.

This Final Program EIR presents agency and public comments received on the Draft Program EIR, as well as responses to these comments (see **Appendix F**). Following publication, the Final

Program EIR will be certified by the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors along with the adoption of the Master Plan and the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.

2.6 SCOPE OF THE EIR

Based on a preliminary analysis of environmental issues associated with the project and comments received on the NOP, LADPW concluded that the proposed project has the potential to have environmental impacts on the following environmental issues:

- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use
- Noise
- Public Services and Utilities
- Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic

Based on the preliminary analysis, LADPW determined that the proposed project would have no or negligible impact with respect to the environmental issues listed below. Therefore, these environmental issues have been excluded from analysis in this Program EIR.

- Agricultural Resources
- Population and Housing (note that growth-inducing impacts are addressed in **Section 6.**)

2.7 AREAS OF KNOWN CONTROVERSY

In the course of preparation of the Master Plan and the Program EIR, the following issues of concern have been identified:

- Potential impact on existing operation and maintenance of flood control facilities and capacities associated with actions involving modification of the river channel related to the integration of recreation and habitat elements.
- Potential impact on surface and ground water rights associated with actions involving groundwater recharge or surface diversions.
- Potential impact on public health from increase in mosquito- and other vector-breeding conditions associated with creation of constructed wetlands, surface or underground stormwater capture/treatment devices, other water features, and corridor enhancement projects in close vicinity to urban development.

These issues are addressed in this document.

2.8 ORGANIZATION OF THE PROGRAM EIR

The Program EIR is organized into the following major sections.

Table of Contents

Section 2 – Introduction

Section 1 – Summary. A summary of the contents of the Program EIR.

Section 2 – Introduction. Background, project objectives, lead agency identification, the purpose and overview of the EIR process, scope of the Program EIR, responsible agencies and approvals, and areas of known controversy.

Section 3 – Project Description. Project location, description of the Concept Design Studies, and Master Plan elements, policies, and programs.

Section 4 – Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures. Description of the environmental setting, criteria for determining impact significance, analysis of project-related impacts, description of mitigation measures for each environmental topic, and summary of future analyses.

Section 5 – Cumulative Impacts. A discussion of past, present and reasonably anticipated future activities that could have additive impacts with those of the proposed project.

Section 6 – Additional Analysis. Additional analyses required by CEQA, including a discussion of the impacts of project alternatives, irreversible environmental changes, unavoidable environmental impacts, growth inducing impacts, and consistency with regional and local planning.

Appendices. List of references, acronyms and abbreviations, glossary, organizations and persons consulted, and preparers of the Program EIR; Notice of Preparation and comments received; technical materials and data supporting the analysis or contents of this Program EIR; and responses to comments received on the Draft Program EIR.

2.9 RELATED DOCUMENTS

The Master Plan and other related documents prepared in the process of developing the Master Plan are available for public review during regular office hours at the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works (900 South Fremont Avenue, Alhambra, California 91803; Mr. Marty Moreno; Phone: 626-458-4119).