

II. INTRODUCTION

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

At a meeting in 1991, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors noted a growing public sentiment for the transformation of the under-used Los Angeles River and Tujunga Wash (river) into a community amenity. As a result, the Board approved a motion and directed the Department of Public Works, with the assistance of the Departments of Parks and Recreation and Regional Planning, to prepare an analysis of potential compatible uses for the river and to develop a proposal to coordinate the efforts by all interested public and private parties in the planning, financing and implementation of the enhancement efforts.


The river passes through 13 jurisdictions and empties into the Pacific Ocean. Along the course, the potential exists for recreational, environmental and aesthetic improvements in conjunction with the primary function of flood control. The Los Angeles River Master Plan identifies issues relevant to the river, involves communities and organizations interested in the river, develops a vision and sets forth an implementation program intended to achieve a better river environment for future generations in the Los Angeles basin.

BACKGROUND

The Los Angeles River Master Plan is the result of increasing citizen interest in the river since the mid-1980s. Responding to this interest, former Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley established a Task Force to investigate opportunities for enhancing the river's environment and developing public recreation sites within the City of Los Angeles' reach of the river. The Task Force was directed to identify demonstration projects that would illustrate opportunities for river enhancement.

The Task Force studied the complex nature of the river for more than a year. They looked at its historic importance as a dependable water source, the siting of the Pueblo near its banks, the role it plays in flood protection as well as the surprisingly abundant vegetation and bird life in some reaches. The Task Force discussions culminated in 11 long-range goals for the river and proposals for three demonstration projects. While the Task Force's focus was on the portion of the river within the City of Los Angeles, it became





evident that the river must be planned for as a whole. In their goals, the Task Force proposed that a Master Plan be completed for the entire 51-mile length of the river.

In July 1991, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a motion to develop such a Master Plan with the intent of finding ways to take positive actions to enhance the river environment.

The Board of Supervisors directed the County Department of Public Works to undertake the planning effort, along with the Departments of Parks and Recreation and Regional Planning. Based on the success of its involvement in Mayor Bradley's Task Force and other projects around the country, the National Park Services Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program was invited to provide technical assistance in the County's Master Plan.

VISION OF THE MASTER PLAN

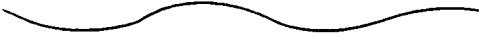
The Master Plan is intended to reflect the needs and ideas of the diverse communities, groups and individuals with an interest in the future of the river. One means of accomplishing this is through the participation of the Los Angeles River Advisory Committee, which was formed in the fall of 1992. The role of the Advisory Committee is to:

- Identify the issues critical to the enhancement of the river.
- Develop a community involvement program, including public meetings.
- Make project recommendations based on Master Plan findings.
- Develop an implementation plan for the projects identified in the Master Plan.

The Los Angeles River is a complex resource, touching many geographic areas and performing many functions in the urban environment. This is the very reason it has the potential to be a significant link between people and neighborhoods. The realization of that potential will require a concerted effort and inter-agency cooperation and coordination.

THE NEED FOR OPEN SPACE






Urban development and flood protection modifications consumed the once abundant open space in the Los Angeles Basin and brought about the channelization of the river. The basin was 98 percent “built out” by the 1980’s. The City of Los Angeles has the least percentage of public open space and park land of any major urban center in the nation. Only 4 percent of the land in the city is devoted to public open space and parks—compared to 9 percent in Boston and 17 percent in New York City.

The presence of public open space significantly improves the quality of life in urban environments. Specific benefits of open space and recreational facilities, such as trails, include:

- **Recreational:** Access to close-to-home parks and open space can benefit the millions of urban residents who typically do not travel long distances to county, state or federal parks and forests.
- **Health:** Opportunities for stress-reducing exercise, which contributes to better health and lower medical costs.
- **Property Values:** Many studies have shown that parks, greenways and open space increase property values, and that the resulting increase in local tax revenue can offset the cost of open space and greenway acquisition and development.
- **Environmental:** The trees and water that are often present in open spaces help mitigate water and air pollution. Development of trails and greenways can decrease air pollution by encouraging people to ride bicycles, run, jog or walk instead of driving cars.
- **Educational:** Public open space provides sites for outdoor science classrooms and for urban wildlife viewing.

The need for these amenities in urban Los Angeles was documented most recently in a survey sponsored by Rebuild L.A. More than 77% of the residents in the areas most affected by the 1992 civil unrest see parks, recreation and adult sports programs as “absolutely critical” or “important” needs in their communities. This need ranks second only to youth services.

In the search for open space, people are looking to public and quasi-public lands which in the past were dedicated to single-purpose uses. Within Los Angeles County, hundreds of miles of flood control channels, railroad rights-of-way and utility corridors may offer some of the best opportunities for developing multi-use, public open space. The river is one of these resources.





MASTER PLAN COMPONENTS

The Los Angeles River Master Plan consists of seven major phases as outlined in the "Blueprint for Action" report to the Board of Supervisors, dated October 10, 1991 (Appendix C).

Phase A (Outreach Phase) constitutes the outreach to all Federal, State and local agencies as well as private organizations and individuals that have jurisdiction or interest within the river corridor. The formation of the Los Angeles River Master Plan Advisory Committee as well as the collection and analysis of various studies and reports prepared for the Los Angeles River is part of this phase.

Phase B (Master Plan Analysis) consists of the identification of existing resources, current uses, key issues, goals and objectives. Also, potential public and private funding sources for Master Plan recommendations are explored in this phase.


Phase C (Master Plan Formulation) divides the river into six broad reaches and identifies, on a reach by reach basis, the local issues, needs, projects and programs to enhance both the river right-of-way and adjacent land uses. To ensure that the ideas of local communities are incorporated in the Master Plan, a high priority is placed on involving the public in this phase.

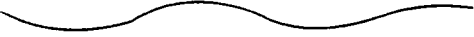
Phase D (Implementation Strategy) includes the identification of priority projects, the development of an implementation time line and implementing agencies.

Phase E (Environmental Review) addresses the potential environmental effects of the Master Plan and suggests mitigation measures to reduce those effects to acceptable levels.

Phase F (Master Plan Adoption) consists of the approval of the Master Plan by affected jurisdictions and the Board of Supervisors.

Phase G (Master Plan Implementation) discusses the process by which the Master Plan will be implemented and identifies affected agencies.





The Los Angeles River Master Plan is unique in that it brings together all the various stakeholders including political, environmental, technical and the community to negotiate a consensus for the enhancement of the Los Angeles River and Tujunga Wash. The plan is unique in its comprehensive scope—it covers the entire 51-mile length of the river and the 9-mile long Tujunga Wash which, between them, flow through 13 cities and nine Los Angeles City Council Districts.

The Los Angeles River Master Plan is the result of the collaboration of various groups, agencies and organizations interested in the future of the river. It includes input provided by communities along the river and carries out short-term demonstration projects. The Los Angeles River Master Plan recommends specific regional and local projects and programs and coordinates these projects on an on-going basis.

