

VII. ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

Based upon the recommendation from the Implementation Subcommittee, a Programmatic Negative Declaration (ND)/Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Los Angeles River Master Plan was prepared to satisfy requirements of both the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). It is included in this Final Master Plan document.

The environmental document analyzed the environmental impacts of the Master Plan and can be considered during implementation of individual projects and General Plan revisions by various entities.

As projects become more defined in the future, this document may also be used as the basis for any required supplemental or addendums.

**PROPOSED PROJECT:
LOS ANGELES RIVER MASTER PLAN**

**DRAFT PROGRAMMATIC
NEGATIVE DECLARATION
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

APPLICANT:

Los Angeles River Master Plan Advisory Committee

LOCATION:

Los Angeles River and Tujunga Wash Tributary
Los Angeles County, California

PREPARED FOR:

*STATE LEAD AGENCY PURSUANT TO CALIFORNIA
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT*
LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Planning Division

900 South Fremont Avenue
Alhambra, California 91802

AND

*FEDERAL LEAD AGENCY PURSUANT TO NATIONAL
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT*

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Los Angeles District

Environmental Resources Branch

300 North Los Angeles Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

PREPARED BY:

SAPPHOS ENVIRONMENTAL

50 S. DeLacey, Suite 210
Pasadena, California 91105

REVIEW PERIOD:

February 9, 1996 to March 11, 1996

COORDINATED BY:

Chris Stone
Manuel L. Quezada
Los Angeles County
Department of Public Works
(818) 458-4309
(818) 458-4318

Ron Lockmann
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Los Angeles District
(213) 894-5413

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Los Angeles River is the primary flood conveyance system for transporting storm flows from a 1,459 square mile watershed to the Pacific Ocean. The watershed is characterized by a ring of precipitous mountains (Santa Susanna Mountains, Santa Monica Mountains, and San Gabriel Mountains) and low lying foothills (Beverly Hills, Baldwin Hills, Elysian Hills, Repetto Hills, San Jose Hills, Puente Hills, Signal Hill, and the Coyote Hills) surrounding an alluvium filled basin which transitions into a broad coastal plain as it approaches the ocean. The Los Angeles River traverses a distance of fifty-one miles from its origin in Calabasas Creek and Bell Creek in the western San Fernando Valley to its outlet in the Pacific Ocean in Long Beach. Tujunga Wash which originates in the San Gabriel Mountains is a major tributary to the Los Angeles River and includes nine additional miles between Hansen Dam and its confluence with the Los Angeles River. Most of the Los Angeles River and all of Tujunga Wash below Hansen Dam is improved, with portions in the Lower Los Angeles River contained by levees.

The volume of water conveyed by the Los Angeles River and its tributaries varies dramatically depending on the time of the year and pattern and magnitude of storm events. The low-flow channel of the Los Angeles River normally carries small volumes of water during summer months from urban sources including Tillman and Glendale Water Reclamation Plants and storm drains. The Los Angeles River can be characterized as conveying large volume, high velocity flood flows during major rainstorms.

The relatively flat areas of the coastal plain of the Los Angeles basin have been largely "built out." The City of Los Angeles has relatively less area of dedicated open space (approximately four percent) when compared to other major metropolitan centers such as Boston (nine percent) and New York City (seventeen percent) (Los Angeles County Department of Public Works 1995a). Decreasing open space resources in the mid-1980s led to renewed interest by the citizens of Los Angeles County in exploring enhancement opportunities for the Los Angeles River to support compatible multi-uses.

The Los Angeles River Master Plan identifies numerous opportunities for enhancing the River's environment and developing public recreation sites. In 1991, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved a motion and directed preparation of a study to identify opportunities for enhancements to support potential compatible and multiple uses within the Los Angeles River and Tujunga Wash. The Board of Supervisors directed the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works to prepare the analysis with assistance from County Departments of Parks and Recreation and Regional Planning. In addition, the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program was invited to provide technical assistance in the preparation of the Master Plan. These parties are collectively referred to as the Planning Team. The Los Angeles River Master Plan Advisory Committee, consisting of interested agencies, cities and community groups, was established in 1992 to assist in the development of a Master Plan. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, various local jurisdictions and community groups would share in the responsibility for funding and implementing individual projects.

The Planning Team defined a seven phase process for developing and implementing the Master Plan. The following table describes the tasks involved in each phase:

PHASE					
STATUS					
A. Outreach					
	Outreach to all Federal, State, and Local Agencies, as well as, private organizations and individuals that have jurisdiction over or interest in the study area resulted in the formation of the Los Angeles River Master Plan Advisory Committee which has been meeting since 1992. Three distinct tasks were accomplished as a result of public outreach: public workshops were used to gauge the level of support for various project ideas; development of demonstration project proposals consistent with Master Plan goals; and coordination with local jurisdiction regarding the purpose and need of individual project elements. Previously proposed reports for the Los Angeles River were collected and analyzed.				
B. Master Plan Analysis					
	The Los Angeles River Master Plan Advisory Committee described existing resources, current uses, key issues, goals, and objectives in a series of Progress Reports. This information is supplemented and summarized in Sections 1, 3, 4, and 5 of the Environmental Assessment/Negative Declaration. Potential public and private services were explored during this phase.				
C. Master Plan Formulation					
	Identification of projects and programs to enhance river right-of-way and adjacent uses consistent with public input received in Phases A and B. See Section 2.				
D. Implementation Strategy					
	Identification of projects that reflect the goals and objectives of local jurisdictions, private organizations, and individuals. It will be the responsibility of local project proponents to define time lines for development and implementation of individual projects.				
E. Environmental Review					
	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>National Environmental Policy Act:</td> <td>Environmental Assessment</td> </tr> <tr> <td>California Environmental Quality Act:</td> <td>Negative Declaration</td> </tr> </table>	National Environmental Policy Act:	Environmental Assessment	California Environmental Quality Act:	Negative Declaration
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F. Master Plan Adoption					
	Decision on the proposed Master Plan by the Board of Supervisors and other implementing jurisdictions. See Section 1.				
G. Master Plan Implementation					
	The Master Plan identifies four categories of projects: existing, planned, proposed, and independent projects identified in other planning efforts. The four categories of projects are illustrated on the project maps in Section 2. Implementation of individual projects is contingent on sponsorship and availability of funding. Some projects may be eligible for funding pursuant to <i>Los Angeles County Proposition A: Safe Neighborhood Parks, Gang Prevention, Tree Planting, Senior and Youth Recreation, Beaches and Wildlife Protection</i> approved by the Voters of Los Angeles County in November 1992.				

The study area addressed in the *Los Angeles River Master Plan* consists of approximately 51 linear miles of the Los Angeles River from its headworks at Calabasas and Bell Creeks to the Pacific Ocean and 9 linear miles of Tujunga Wash from Hansen Dam to its confluence with the Los Angeles River. For the purposes of project planning and environmental analysis, the study area has been organized into six study reaches. Locations within approximately one-half mile of either side of the river's center line were evaluated in the process of project planning, mapping and the supporting environmental evaluation. Existing flood control facilities lie within the jurisdictions of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works. The Corps is responsible for operation and maintenance of the River within the Sepulveda Basin located in the City of Los Angeles and the portion located just downstream of Lankershim Boulevard to Southern Avenue in the City of South Gate. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works is responsible for operation and maintenance of the Los Angeles River and Tujunga Wash in the remainder of the study area. The Department is the permitting authority for both facilities. Areas adjacent to these facilities that were addressed in the *Los Angeles River Master Plan* lie within the jurisdiction of thirteen cities, including the Cities of Bell, Bell Gardens, Burbank, Compton, Cudahy, Glendale, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Lynwood, Maywood, Paramount, South Gate, and Vernon and incorporated County territory. The *Los Angeles River Master Plan* considers five primary project issues identified in the public outreach program: environmental enhancement; aesthetic improvement; economic development; recreation, and flood management and water conservation. In all instances, proposed projects must be consistent with the primary purpose of flood control for the Los Angeles River and Tujunga Wash.

As a result of the environmental analysis contained in this Environmental Assessment and Negative Declaration it has been determined that the *Los Angeles River Master Plan* will not result in significant impacts that cannot be mitigated below the level of significance as defined by the National Environmental Policy Act, the California Environmental Quality Act, or other applicable statutes or regulations. Significant construction related impacts on air quality will be avoided by requiring the construction contractor(s) to comply with recommendations of the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). It is assumed that the proposed park improvements will be designed to avoid significant increases to peak period traffic. Phase I Site Assessment work must be completed prior to ground disturbing activities. All ground-disturbing projects must comply with the recommendations of Phase I Site Assessments. This Negative Declaration and Environmental Assessment identifies areas that require additional evaluation of cultural resources prior to the initiation of ground-disturbing activities. It is assumed that all tree planting and park improvements projects will be designed to avoid impacts on cultural resources.

The site-specific projects recommended by the proposed *Los Angeles River Master Plan* provide public benefits related to land use and planning, biological resources, aesthetics, and recreation. The proposed *Los Angeles River Master Plan* achieves planning guidelines established in the *Federal Water Project Recreation Act* by: identifying opportunities for outdoor recreation and habitat enhancement that could be developed in association with the Los Angeles River, a federal flood protection project; integration of proposed improvements with other federal, state and local projects; and encouragement of non-federal cooperation in the administration of the proposed projects. The *Los Angeles River Master Plan* is consistent with SCAG's *Regional Comprehensive Plan* goal of emphasizing and enhancing existing open-space resources also providing opportunities for outdoor recreation. The proposed *Los Angeles River Master Plan* is consistent with land use designations contained in the

County of Los Angeles *General Plan* (County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning, 1993 and 1980) and the thirteen local jurisdictions through which it passes.

The proposed *Los Angeles Master Plan* provides three distinct benefits for biological resources: (1) planting of a nearly continuous greenway adjacent to the 51-mile reach of the Los Angeles River and the 9-mile reach of Tujunga Wash; (2) habitat restoration and enhancement, particularly in association with the proposed Dominguez Gap Demonstration Project; and (3) protection of existing areas that provide suitable habitat for native species.

The proposed *Los Angeles River Master Plan* includes four types of aesthetic enhancement projects to remediate existing visually degraded sections of the Los Angeles River: (1) Mapping and Signage System; (2) Tree Plantings and Aesthetic Enhancement Programs; (3) River Art; and (4) Graffiti Abatement Programs.

Site-specific recommendations for recreation improvements contained in the proposed *Los Angeles River Master Plan* provide numerous opportunities to expand the accessibility and quality of outdoor recreation facilities to meet the diversified needs of County residents. Specifically, the proposed plan includes: regional trail system improvements providing a regional bike trail connections with other existing public facilities near the Los Angeles River and Tujunga Wash; the development of interpretive sites that use the River as an outdoor classroom; Vista Points at Bridges to enhance existing pedestrian crossings of the River; development of parks to serve neighborhoods and communities adjacent to the River; and Demonstration Projects that provide aesthetic, educational and recreational enhancements.