

This Environmental Assessment/Negative Declaration has been prepared at a programmatic level of detail to satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and the California Environmental Quality Act. The programmatic Environmental Assessment/Negative Declaration enables the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to characterize the overall characteristics and environmental effects of the *Los Angeles River Master Plan* for consideration in the decision-making process. Upon consideration of implementing individual Master Plan Projects, the local lead agency must evaluate the environmental impacts of the proposed activity to determine if their effects were fully analyzed in the programmatic Environmental Assessment/Negative Declaration. If the activity has no effects beyond those analyzed in this Environmental Assessment/ Negative Declaration, the lead agency may conclude that no additional environmental documentation is required. Should the assumptions of the Environmental Assessment/Negative Declaration contained herein be violated, the preparation of appropriate documentation would be required.

1.1 PROJECT PROPONENT

Los Angeles River Master Plan Advisory Committee

1.2 PROPONENT'S ADDRESS

Los Angeles County Department of Public Works
900 South Fremont Avenue
Alhambra, CA 91803-1331

1.3 PROJECT TYPE

The proposed Los Angeles Master Plan (Master Plan) will serve as a long-term guide for the coordinated use, enhancement, development, and management of all the resources within the Los Angeles River (River) and Tujunga Wash including adjacent lands within a one half mile radius of the center line of the River.

1.4 PROJECT LOCATION

The Master Plan focuses on the approximately 51 mile long Los Angeles River, 9 miles of the Tujunga Wash from Hansen Dam to the Los Angeles River, as well as the adjacent lands of these two water resources in Los Angeles County, California (see Figure 1.4-1, *Vicinity Map*). The River stretches from its origin at the confluence of Bell and Calabasas Creeks at Owensmouth Avenue in San Fernando Valley to its outlet at the Pacific Ocean in the City of Long Beach. Locations within approximately one-half mile of either side of the center line of the river were evaluated in the process of project planning, mapping and the supporting



..... Los Angeles River/Tujunga Wash



FIGURE 1.4-1
VICINITY MAP

Map Not to Scale

LOS ANGELES RIVER MASTER PLAN
Negative Declaration/Environmental Assessment

environmental evaluation. Both 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 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 River and its tributaries pass through 13 cities, including the cities of Bell, Bell Gardens, Burbank, Compton, Cudahy, Glendale, Long Beach, Los Angeles (9 City Council Districts), Lynwood, Maywood, Paramount, South Gate, and Vernon and unincorporated County territory. In the Master Plan, the River and Wash are divided into a total of six reaches beginning in Long Beach, at the mouth of the River, and continuing upstream through the Mid-cities, Downtown Los Angeles, Glendale Narrows, San Fernando Valley and Tujunga Wash areas (see Figure 1.4-2, *Project Reaches*). These reaches do not coincide with the study reaches used in the evaluation of the Los Angeles County Drainage Area (LACDA) Study evaluated by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Work and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. A list of the reach areas for the Master Plan and their specific locations follow:

- **Reach Number 1 - Southern Cities:** This nine mile reach extends from Atlantic Avenue to the Pacific Ocean, includes the cities of Carson and Long Beach.
- **Reach Number 2 - Mid-Cities:** This reach runs for eleven and one-half miles from Washington Boulevard south to Atlantic Avenue, and includes the cities of Vernon, Maywood, Bell Gardens, Bell, Commerce, Cudahy, South Gate, Downey, Lynwood, Paramount, and Compton.
- **Reach Number 3 - Downtown Los Angeles:** This five mile reach covers the area between the confluence with Arroyo Seco Channel and Washington Boulevard, and includes the City of Los Angeles neighborhoods of Boyle Heights, Lincoln Heights, Chinatown and the Downtown area. The River is visible from the Hollywood (101), Santa Monica (10), and Pomona (60) Freeways.
- **Reach Number 4 - Glendale Narrows:** In the ten miles between Barham Boulevard and its confluence with Arroyo Seco near the Pasadena Freeway, the Los Angeles River passes through the cities of Burbank, Glendale, and the communities of Los Feliz, Atwater Village, Elysian Valley, Silverlake, Glassell Park and Cypress Park in the City of Los Angeles.
- **Reach Number 5 - San Fernando Valley:** Flowing east for approximately sixteen miles along the base of the Santa Monica Mountains, the River passes through the communities of Canoga Park, Winnetka, Reseda, Encino, West Van Nuys, Sherman Oaks, Studio City and Toluca Lake, all in the City of Los Angeles.
- **Reach Number 6 - Tujunga Wash:** This reach includes the communities of Lakeview Terrace, Sun Valley, Panorama City, Van Nuys and North Hollywood, all within the City of Los Angeles. The northern boundary of this reach is at Hansen Dam while the

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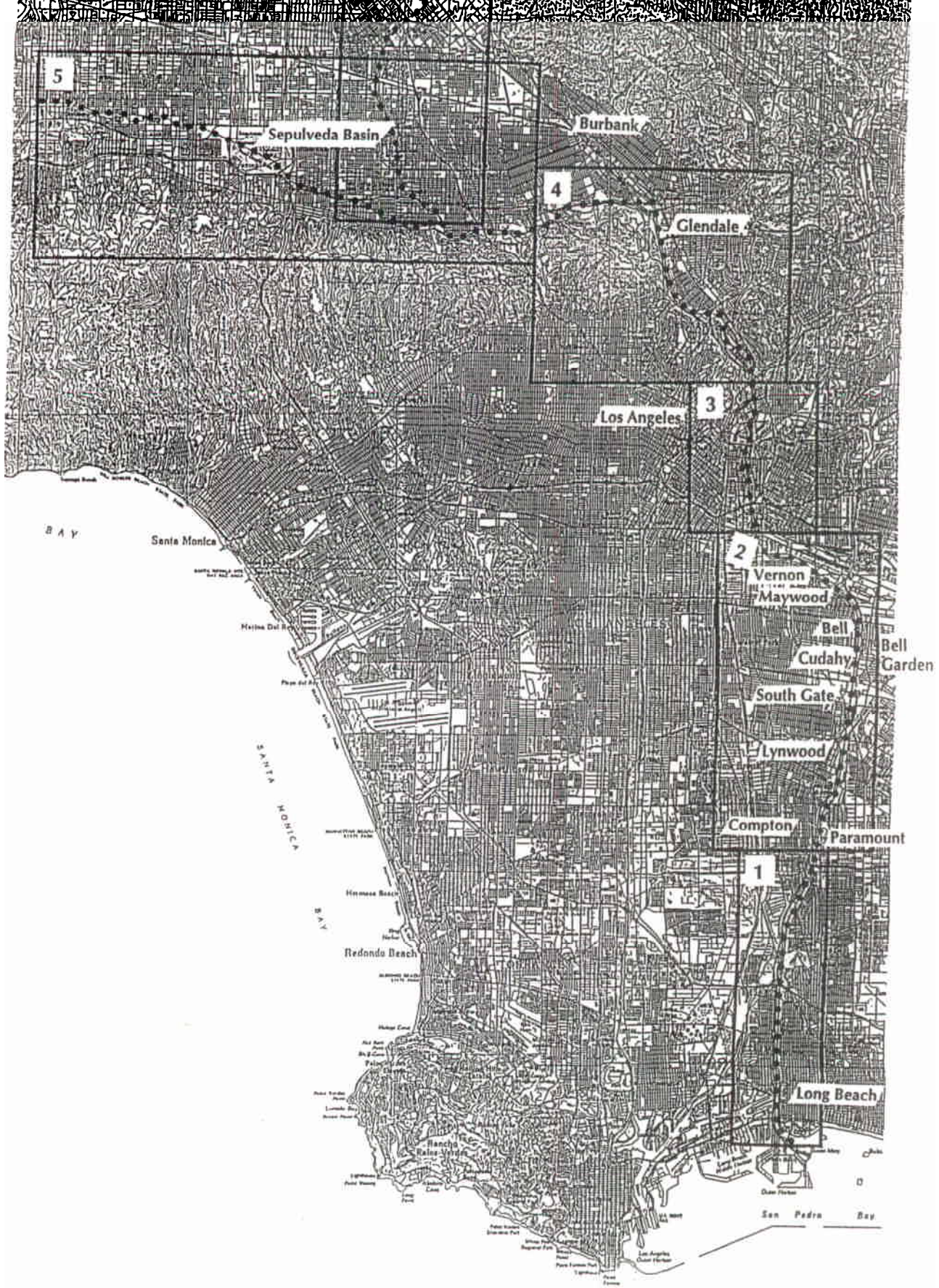
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LEGEND

 N

 Project Location

 Project Reach

Scale: 1 Inch = 16,500 Feet

FIGURE 1.4-2
PROJECT REACHES

southern boundary is the confluence of Tujunga Wash with the Los Angeles River. This stretch of Tujunga Wash runs for approximately nine miles.

1.5 DESCRIPTION

In response to a renewed interest in the Los Angeles River as a valuable multi-use resource, an Advisory Committee, consisting of affected agencies, cities and community groups was formed in September 1992 to assist in formulating and developing the Master Plan. A complete listing of Los Angeles River Advisory Committee Members is included in the Acknowledgments section of the *Los Angeles River Master Plan*. In July 1991, the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors directed the Departments of Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Regional Planning to undertake this planning effort of preparing a Master Plan for the Los Angeles River. The proposed actions identified in this Master Plan are a result of coordinated efforts from these Departments, the Advisory Committee, and all interested public and private parties, in the planning, financing, and implementation efforts.

Specific goals of the *Los Angeles River Master Plan* were developed and approved by the Advisory Committee:

- Ensure flood control and public safety needs are met;
- Improve the appearance of the River and pride of local communities in it;
- Promote the River as an economic asset to surrounding communities;
- Preserve, enhance and restore environmental resources in and along the River;
- Consider storm water management alternatives;
- Ensure public involvement and coordinate Master Plan development and implementation among jurisdictions;
- Provide a safe environment and a variety of recreational opportunities along the River, and;
- Ensure safe access to, and compatibility between, the River and other activity centers.

The proposed *Los Angeles River Master Plan* provides recommendations for the development of six categories of project improvements. Specific project recommendations are provided to achieve the overall goals and objectives of the Master Plan and the specific goals and objectives for the six categories of project improvements. The specific project recommendations under consideration are described in detail in the proposed Los Angeles River Master Plan and in Section 2 of this document. A list of specific project recommendation identified for the six categories of the project improvements follows:

Aesthetic Improvements

- Mapping and signage system
- Tree plantings and aesthetic enhancement programs
- River art
- Graffiti abatement programs

Economic Development

- Enhancement of river frontage property
- Major gateways
- Minor gateways
- Concessionaire programs

Environmental Enhancements

- Tree planting
- Habitat restoration
- Habitat protection
- Water quality and environmental education

Flood Management and Water Conservation

- Allow for additional storm water detention/retention (public/private facilities)
- Additional recreational facilities
- Create wildlife and native riparian habitats

Jurisdiction and Public Involvement

Issues related to coordination of local jurisdictions to develop the proposed *Los Angeles River Master Plan* through public input solicited in a series of community workshops was accomplished during phase A, B, and C between 1992 and 1995. Similarly, the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works and Planning Team accomplished elements during the early planning phases of the project: designation of a project manager; formation of an interagency implementation plan; establishment of a Citizens' Advisory Committee; and continuance of the Los Angeles River Advisory Committee.

Recreation

- Regional Trail System Improvements
- Interpretative Sites
- Vista Points at Bridges
- Development of recreation facilities in areas adjacent to public rights-of-way

The primary purpose of the Los Angeles River is for providing a safe level of flood control protection to the area. The proposed recreational and river enhancements that are under consideration in the *Los Angeles River Master Plan* would be designed in accordance with Corps and County flood control standards. All designs would comply with requirements to provide access pursuant to the *Americans with Disabilities Act*.

1.6 BEGINNING/COMPLETION DATES

In July, 1991, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors directed the Departments of Public Works to begin the Master Plan analysis to identify enhancement opportunities. In September 1995, the *Draft Los Angeles River Master Plan Report* was distributed to the Advisory Committee for review and comment. Approval of the *Final Los Angeles River Master Plan* by the Board of Supervisors is scheduled for consideration in June 1996. Implementation of the proposed Master Plan by the Department of Public Works in coordination with other Federal,

State, County, and local agencies and community group, is long-term and thus will be dependent on available funding requirements and phasing recommended in the adopted Master Plan.

1.7 PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the *Los Angeles River Master Plan* is to provide a plan for the optimization and enhancement of the Los Angeles River and Tujunga Wash as multi-use resources, without compromising the primary purpose of providing flood control protection to the area. Besides placing emphasis on the need for the proposed activities and their consistency with the overall objectives related to flood protection, the proposed action will also support the particular needs of recreational and environmental enhancement for residents within the service area, aesthetic improvements, enrichment of the quality of life for nearby residents, and regional economic development.

There is a need for public open-space to improve the quality of life in the urban setting of the Los Angeles River Basin (Basin). Development and the flood protection that brought about the channelization of the River resulted in the Basin being "built out". The City of Los Angeles has the least amount of land, only 4 percent, devoted to public open-space and recreational facilities. The desire for such facilities was recorded in a Rebuild L.A. sponsored survey, which documented over 77 percent of the residents in this area seeing parks, recreation, and adult sports programs as "absolutely critical" or "important" needs in their communities. (Los Angeles County Departments Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Regional Planning 1995.) Implementation of this proposed Master Plan, will encourage opportunities for developing the Los Angeles River and Tujunga Wash, and adjacent land as multi-use, public open-space areas.

1.8 OTHER ACTIONS FOR WHICH THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT/NEGATIVE DECLARATION WILL BE USED

The environmental assessment has been prepared with the expectation that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers decision is the only federal action required in support of the *Los Angeles River Master Plan*.

The Environmental Assessment/Negative Declaration is being prepared by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works at a programmatic level in support of their decision-making process related to the *Los Angeles River Master Plan*. The environmental analysis included in this environmental assessment/negative declaration is sufficient to support implementation of many of the environmental enhancement and aesthetic improvement projects under consideration in the *Los Angeles River Master Plan* and as described in Section 2 of this document. Supplemental environmental documentation may be required where local jurisdictions will consider decisions related to implementation of specific projects, particularly economic development projects, recreation improvements, and development of interpretative sites. The local project proponent may tier off of the environmental analysis contained in this environmental assessment/negative declaration and provide supplemental documentation as appropriate to demonstrate consistency with the assumptions made in this document.

Conversely, the local project proponent may provide supplemental analysis and recommended mitigation measures where an assumption or assumptions of this environmental analysis have been violated, but the overall ability to mitigate all impacts below the level of significance can be demonstrated.

The *Los Angeles River Master Plan* has been prepared in conformance with the federal statutes and regulations that guide use of the portions of the Los Angeles River under the control of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Similarly, the *Los Angeles River Master Plan* has been developed in conformance with the Los Angeles County *General Plan*, and adopted plans and policies of the thirteen local jurisdictions. It is anticipated that this Environmental Assessment/Negative Declaration will serve as the basis for local jurisdictions incorporating the *Los Angeles River Master Plan* as a General Plan Amendment and determining that the amendment will not have a significant effect on the physical environment.

1.9 OTHER AVAILABLE ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

The Biota of the Los Angeles River: An Overview of the Historical and Present Plant and Animal Life of the Los Angeles River Drainage (California Department of Fish and Game 1993).

Cultural Resources Overview and Survey for the Los Angeles County Drainage Area Review Study (Cottrell, Van Wormer, and Cooper 1985).

Meeting Minutes of the Los Angeles River Advisory Committee (Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Regional Planning, National Park Service, and the Los Angeles River Advisory Committee 1995a; 1994b,c,d,f; 1993a,c,d; and 1992a)

Progress Reports to the Los Angeles River Advisory Committee (Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Regional Planning, and the National Park Service 1995c; 1994e; 1993a,b; and 1992b)

Los Angeles River Master Plan (Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, Regional Planning, and the Los Angeles River Advisory Committee 1995b).

Master Environmental Impact Report: Los Angeles County Drainage Area Project (Los Angeles County Department of Public Works 1994a).

Traffic Volumes (The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works 1994).

Cultural Resource Investigation: Los Angeles County Drainage Area (Romani, Storm 1994).

An Archeological and Paleontological Resource Survey of the Los Angeles River, Rio Hondo River, and the Whittier Narrows Flood Control Basin (Stickel 1976).

Los Angeles County Drainage Area Review: Final Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement and Supporting Technical Studies for Recreation, Geotechnical Investigation, Real Estate and Design (1991a,b, and c).

Planning Aid Letter on the Los Angeles County Drainage Area Water Control Study (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1987).