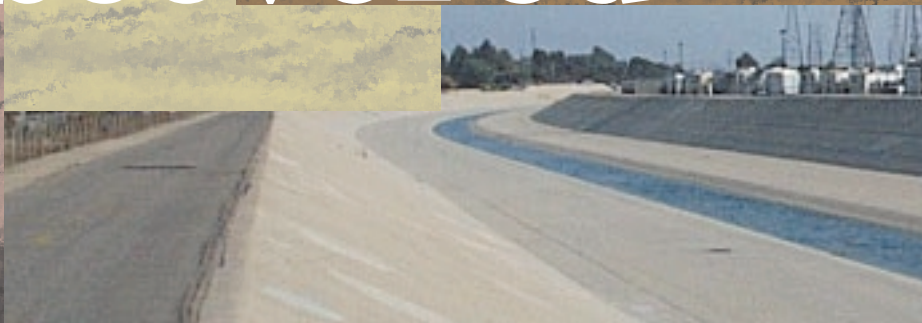




CREATING THE SAN GABRIEL RIVER MASTER PLAN



a common thread rediscovered



The San Gabriel River is the centerpiece of an integrated watershed system that provides water, flood protection, habitat, open space and recreation.

INSIDE . . .

the san gabriel river watershed
the community steering committee
concept map
river enhancement projects

bringing

master plan vision and goals

As developed by the San Gabriel River Master Plan Steering Committee

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

- Preserve and enhance habitat systems through public education, connectivity and balance with other uses
- Encourage and enhance safe and diverse recreation systems, while providing for expansion, equitable and sufficient access, balance and multipurpose uses
- Enhance and protect open space systems through conservation, aesthetics, connectivity, stewardship and multipurpose uses
- Maintain flood protection and existing water and other rights while enhancing flood management activities through integration with recreation, open space and habitat systems
- 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

FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, THE WATERS OF THE SAN GABRIEL RIVER have nurtured life along their path from the mountains through the valley to the ocean. The Tongva Indians (sometimes called the Gabrieliños) considered it one of the four sacred rivers of Southern California. Beginning in the 1930s the San Gabriel River was engineered through a series of dams and levees to provide water and flood protection. Today it is still the primary source of water for the San Gabriel Valley.

Now it's time to rediscover this valuable resource, enhance its ecosystem, open space and recreation, and offer more of the river's benefits to all the communities along its route.

The Opportunities of the River

The headwaters of the river begin in the steep slopes of the San Gabriel Mountains. Wide, deep canyons, spectacular mountain scenery and varied wildlife characterize this segment of the river. Three major dams in the upper watershed provide flood protection and store water for use in the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

Once the river reaches the San Gabriel Valley, the terrain levels out. In this urban area, the river flows in a soft-bottomed channel between raised levees. Two more large dams—the Santa Fe Dam and the Whittier Narrows Dam—are found here. Small rubber

dams can be inflated when necessary to divert water to “spreading grounds,” land that functions like giant sponges, soaking up water and replenishing the groundwater basins underground.

A few miles below the Whittier Narrows Dam, the soft bottom of the river is replaced by a concrete channel for about 10 miles. The river then returns to a soft bottom, and flows another 3.5 miles through a natural estuary to the Pacific Ocean.

Originally, the river was wide and shallow, surrounded by native vegetation. To manage flooding and store water, the river channel was made deeper and narrower. This flood protection allowed safe urban development almost to the river's edge. For years, the river has done its job so well that it has allowed us simply to forget about it as it silently runs through the entire valley.

Now, the communities of the San Gabriel River are looking to expand recreation, open space and habitat, using new information gained from the sciences of ecology and river geomorphology and the latest engineering techniques for urban water management.

This new awareness offers an opportunity to enhance community identity and sense of place, as we rediscover our common thread, the San Gabriel River.

Community-Based Planning Process

On September 7, 1999, the County of Los Angeles took the first steps in revitalizing the river when the Board of Supervisors unanimously passed a motion to instruct the Director of the Department of Public Works (DPW) to prepare a San Gabriel River Master Plan for Board approval, with the assistance of the Departments of Regional Planning and Parks and Recreation, and the National Park Service.

The DPW established a Steering Committee composed of cities along the river; water and regulatory agencies; interested community, business and environmental groups; and other stakeholders. The Steering

[open here for map](#) ►

communities together

Committee conducted a two-year information exchange and consensus-building process, leading to a common vision for the river's future. Meetings with representatives of all 19 cities along the river resulted in a "Mosaic of City Visions." In addition, interviews were conducted with environmental groups, recreational user groups, and water and public agencies (see back page). Steering Committee members met about 35 times over three years, spending over 10,000 hours of combined efforts developing elements of the Master Plan.

Planning for the River's Future

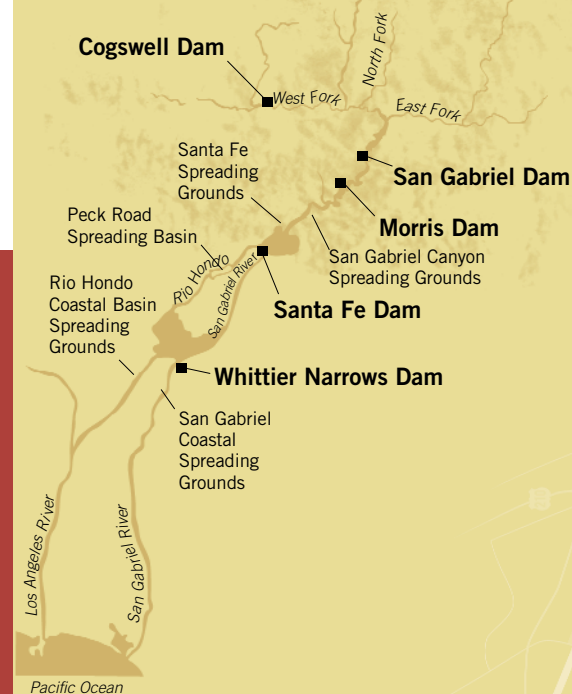
The San Gabriel River Master Plan reflects a growing interest in the recreation, open space and habitat enhancement opportunities along the river. The consensus-based Master Plan identifies over 150 corridor-wide projects in a comprehensive vision of the river (see pages 4-7). Nine categories of river enhancement projects embody the goals of the Master Plan and serve as a framework to guide future projects (see pages 8-10). All projects in the Master Plan address five major goals:

- **HABITAT.** The San Gabriel River can function as a major habitat corridor to replace some of the estuaries, salt marshes, wetlands and riparian habitats that have been lost. For example, the Whittier Narrows area is a critical stopover point for birds on the Pacific Flyway. The Plan offers opportunities to preserve and restore habitat and wildlife.
- **RECREATION.** Already a tremendous regional resource, the river offers many additional recreational opportunities. The mountain area alone has more than 50 hiking trails, and a 37-mile bicycle trail running from the edge of the mountains to the Pacific coast. Horseback riding, bicycling, hiking,

picnicking, fishing, swimming, off-road driving, shooting, field activities like soccer and baseball, and even gold panning will be more accessible to many more residents.

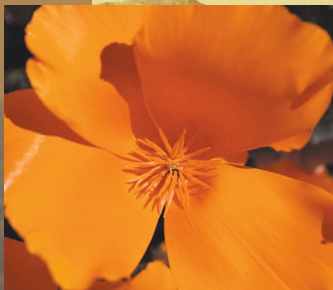
- **OPEN SPACE.** The San Gabriel is a "living" river, with wide open spaces, greenery, running water, and the sounds of birds and other wildlife. The Plan includes projects that maintain and preserve the open space areas along the river.
- **FLOOD PROTECTION.** The Plan maintains and enhances all existing flood protection elements.
- **WATER SUPPLY AND QUALITY.** The San Gabriel Valley receives most of its water from the river and groundwater basins. Surface water rights are owned by two entities: the San Gabriel River Water Committee and the San Gabriel Valley Protective Association. The Plan includes projects to protect and enhance these water resources and help cities and agencies meet water quality objectives.

The San Gabriel River ties our natural and urban environments together, providing a sense of place for all the communities along its banks. Residents, businesses, industry, and government are working to ensure that the Master Plan protects and enhances the San Gabriel River, and increases our connections and enjoyment of this wonderful natural resource.



the watershed

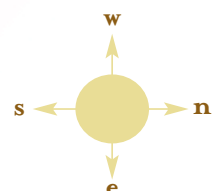
The San Gabriel River begins in the high watershed of the San Gabriel Mountains. The watershed covers 640 square miles; the river flows 58 miles down to the Pacific Ocean. It's home to almost 300 species of birds, 250 types of plants, and 25 different animals. The Whittier Narrows Nature Center is a 419-acre urban wildlife sanctuary focused on the river environment. The Santa Fe Dam and the Whittier Narrows Dam Recreation Areas offer a mix of open space, swimming, hiking, camping, picnicking and other recreation, serving millions of Los Angeles residents every year.



THE CONSENSUS-BASED MASTER PLAN for the San Gabriel River provides a comprehensive vision, from the mountains to the ocean. It integrates over 150 potential enhancement projects identified by the 19 cities along the river, the County of Los Angeles and the many public agencies and community organizations who participated in developing The San Gabriel River Master Plan.

how the river provides our water

Water from rain flows from the San Gabriel Mountains and valley areas and percolates down into groundwater basins underneath the San Gabriel Valley. The main San Gabriel Basin lies to the north of the Whittier Narrows, the Central Basin lies to the south. To retain as much water as possible and to recharge these critical groundwater basins, additional areas, called spreading grounds, have been constructed throughout the Valley. We can now capture about 80% of rainwater runoff. Water wells pump water out of the groundwater basins and provide water for millions of Valley residents.



from the mountains



key to concept map

The Master Plan includes projects that enhance habitat, recreation and open space along the river.* Enhancement Project Categories are explained in more detail on page 8.

GATEWAYS

Gateways where local streets cross the river and at entrances to existing paths and trails will connect the surrounding communities with the river (Enhancement Project Category 3).

EXISTING TRAILS

Improvements to over 50 hiking, biking and equestrian trails and the 37-mile-long bike trail will create a unified trail system (Enhancement Project Category 1).

PROPOSED TRAILS

New trails will link existing trails and connect the community with the river, increasing access to recreation and open space (Enhancement Project Categories 1 and 4).

EXISTING PARKS

Park and recreation areas will be linked with each other and the river, increasing community access.

PROPOSED PARKS

New parks along the river will link with existing and proposed trails (Enhancement Project Categories 6, 7, and 8).

RESERVOIRS

Reservoirs will continue to retain water and provide water recreation areas.

SPREADING GROUNDS

Spreading grounds will continue to retain water diverted from the river and provide habitat.

LANDSCAPING

Landscape and streetscape beautification projects will enhance the aesthetic beauty of the river (Enhancement Project Categories 1 and 3).



EDUCATION CENTERS

River education centers will add to the enjoyment and knowledge of the river and its ecosystem (Enhancement Project Category 2).



PROPOSED WETLANDS

New wetlands will cleanse the river and provide new habitat (Enhancement Project Category 5).



HABITAT

The river corridor will provide increased habitat for Southern California wildlife.



HABITAT CONNECTIONS

Connections between existing habitat areas will help wildlife negotiate an otherwise dense urban area. For example, a new connection will link the Puente Hills with the Whittier Narrows Nature Center.



UNDEVELOPED OPEN SPACE

These areas will be reserved for future uses, including economic development, habitat and recreation (Enhancement Project Category 7).

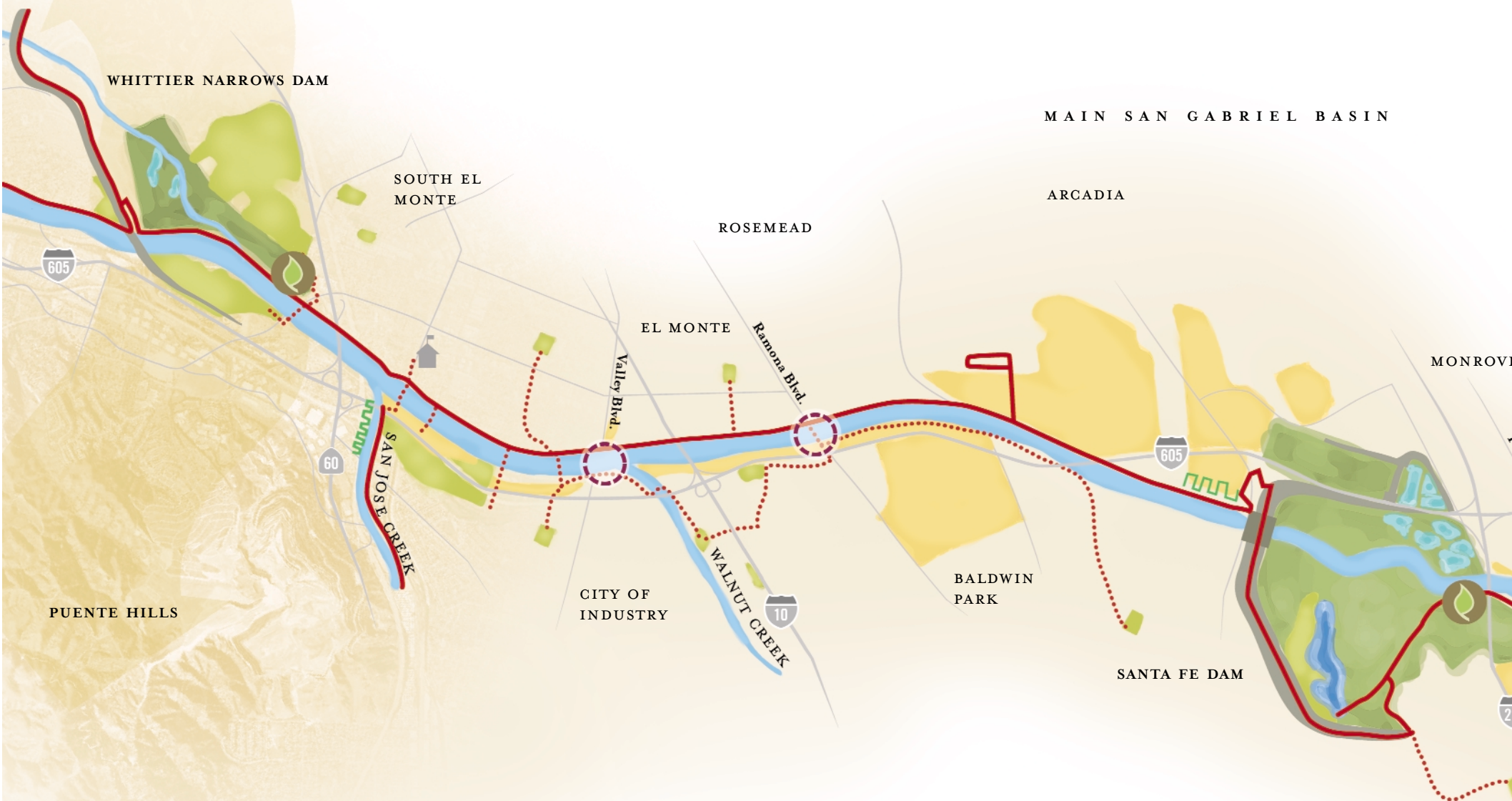


EXISTING DAMS/LEVEES

The current dam and levee system will be maintained and improved.

*The concept map is illustrative and is not drawn to scale.

to the ocean...



master plan meets diverse goals

This concept plan responds to the three major goals identified by the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors when it instructed the Department of Public Works to develop a Master Plan for the San Gabriel River.

HABITAT

The plan increases habitat through:

- Greater habitat connectivity
- New wetlands
- Native vegetation and landscaping

RECREATION

The plan expands and enhances recreation, critical to the almost 4 million residents of the San Gabriel Valley, and includes:

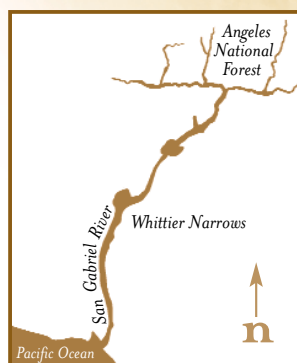
- New access points
- New and improved pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian trails
- New parks
- Environmental education centers
- New recreation areas



OPEN SPACE

The plan enhances and reserves open space for future generations and includes:

- Additional open space areas
- Enhancement of existing reservoirs and spreading grounds
- New habitat areas
- Reclamation of industrial land



The north arrow on the large concept map is rotated 90° right.

THE MASTER PLAN PROVIDES NINE CENTRAL CONCEPTS FOR RIVER ENHANCEMENT

to inspire cities, agencies and other stakeholders to create their own projects. Replicating these projects all along the river will create dramatic improvements and an enhanced identity for the river as a whole.

1 TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS

Trail enhancements will create a cohesive, identifiable and comfortable regional trail network, using the river as



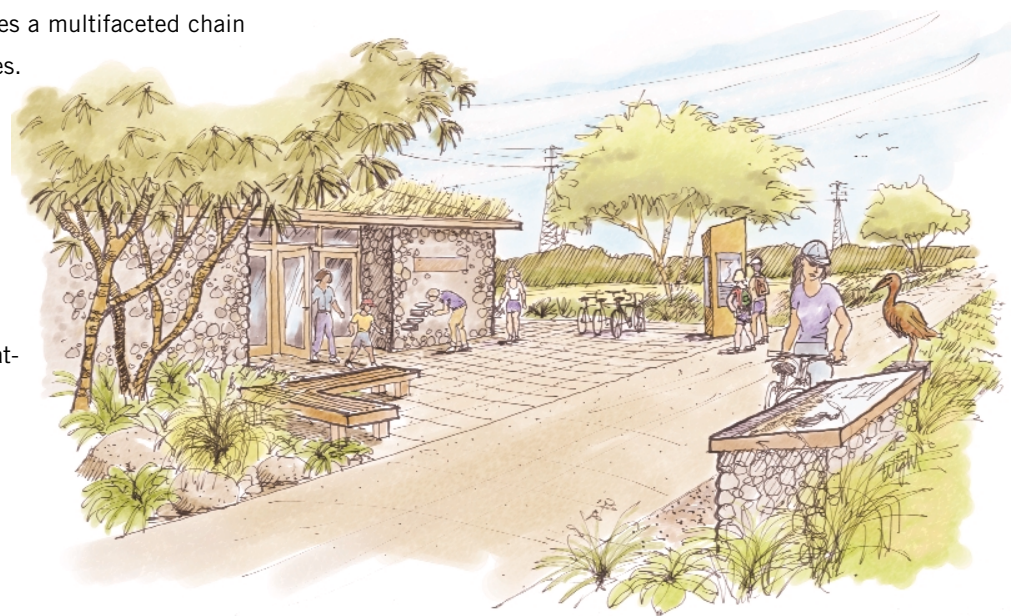
a framework. As individual projects are completed, they will strengthen our link to the river and will create an enhanced “sense of place” for community residents. Elements in this trail design framework include:

- **SIGNAGE**
- **FENCING**
- **LANDSCAPING** Native plants and trees, natural stones and boulders
- **TRAIL SURFACING**
- **LIGHTING** Themed lighting design in appropriate places
- **SITE AMENITIES**
- **GATEWAYS** At river entrances and crossings

2 EDUCATIONAL CENTERS

Educational centers will inform and educate visitors about the river and its environs—ideal for school and youth groups, as well as casual visitors. A network of centers along the river creates a multifaceted chain of living museum experiences. Each will have a unique program and purpose, depending on location and the local environment. Ecologically designed, these centers touch the river as lightly as possible, incorporating environmentally friendly building materials and the

native landscape palette. Centers accommodate both large and small groups, indoors and outdoors. Interpretive elements throughout the landscape also enhance the visitor experience.



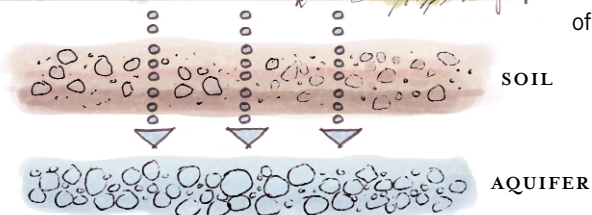
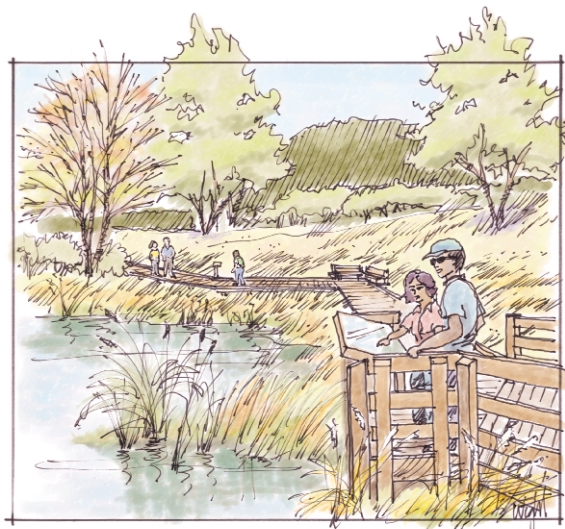
3 BRIDGES, GATEWAYS AND CONNECTIONS

Cohesive design of elements such as bridges, trails and other access points, help create “gateways” that reconnect the river with residential areas and commercial districts. Gateways provide easily recognized points of access, enhance the river’s visibility and identity, and symbolically link it to the communities it flows through.

ancement projects

4 MULTIPLE USES ON CORRIDOR RIGHTS-OF-WAY

Large utility towers create open areas along the river corridor. Utility companies own most of these areas, which have limited public use due to safety, maintenance and operational requirements. However, utility corridors have been opened to the public along selected portions of the river, by introducing community- and habitat-friendly uses such as gardens, parks and trails. Planting with native vegetation also increases habitat and reduces maintenance costs for utility companies.



5 BIO-ENGINEERED WETLANDS

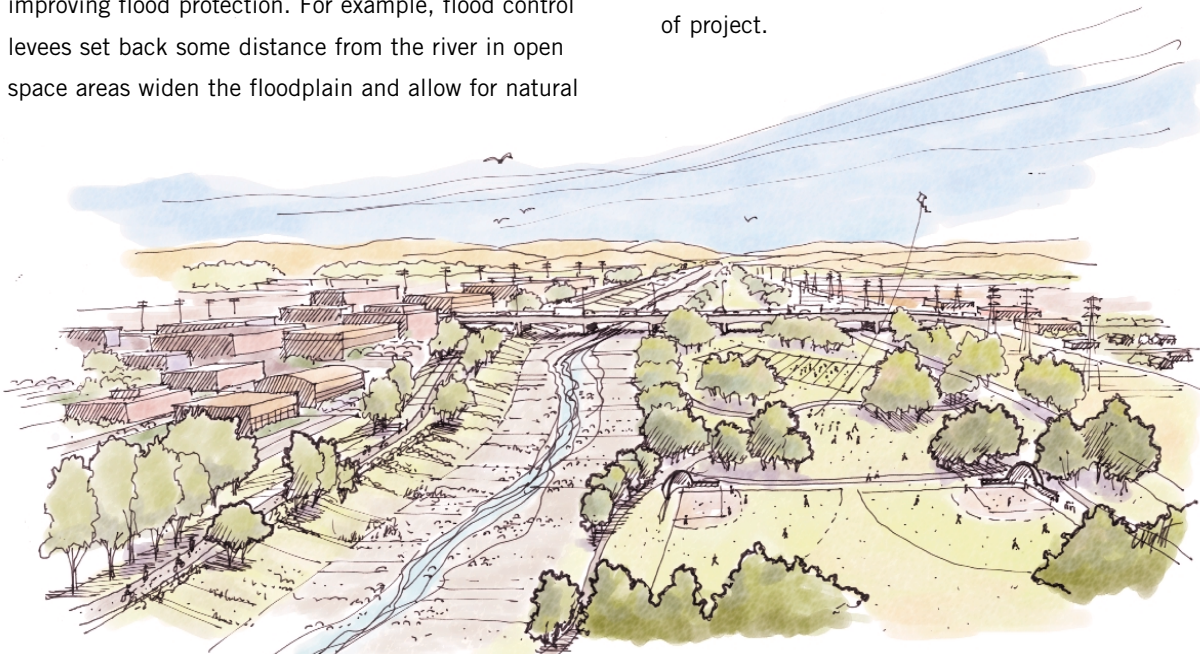
Bio-engineered wetlands and streams mimic natural water purification processes. Wetlands usually occur along riparian corridors or in artesian areas where the groundwater table is high and water appears on the surface when the ground is saturated. Planners develop bio-engineered wetlands in large open spaces downstream of areas where industrial, commercial or heavy residential

uses generate polluted stormwater runoff. As shown here, new wetlands send urban runoff through an “obstacle course” of vegetation and soil that cleanses the water. Water either percolates down and recharges the groundwater or continues as a surface stream back to the river.

6 FLOOD CHANNEL ENHANCEMENTS

Environmental restoration projects creatively blend ecology and engineering to restore natural attributes of the river system at selected locations—while maintaining and improving flood protection. For example, flood control levees set back some distance from the river in open space areas widen the floodplain and allow for natural

river rises during heavy rains. Natural-looking terraces built over engineered levees can follow the river’s natural meandering and become parkways. Those areas can be used for recreation during dry periods. Less developed areas along the river may allow space for this type of project.



As individual projects are completed, they will strengthen our link to the river and create an enhanced “sense of place” for community residents.



River restoration projects creatively blend ecology and engineering to restore natural attributes of the river system.

8 RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

New and improved recreational and park facilities along the river carefully balance active recreational uses such as sports fields and playgrounds, with more passive uses that are habitat-friendly. Additional recreation is critically needed for many of the communities along the river corridor. Recreational programming ensures that these uses remain compatible with other functions of the river and builds a larger constituency of groups and individuals who are aware of the importance of the river in their community.



9 DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

Standards and guidelines provide site and building design information to encourage new development and other land use projects that are compatible with the vision and goals of the Master Plan. For example, a model ordinance outlines landscape design, vegetation, surfacing, drainage engineering, roofing, building materials and other

7 LAND RECLAMATION

Land reclamation transforms landscapes from previous urban and industrial uses to make them available for other economically viable and ecologically sustainable uses. For example, gravel pits, old parking lots, exhausted mines and other unused land can become parks, residential and commercial development, restored habitat areas, “green” golf courses and river frontage. The cumulative effect of reclamation along the river offers increased open space, important groundwater protection and recharge, and economic development potential.

sustainable land use practices. Other standards help cities and agencies meet their water quality objectives. Standards and guidelines provide a useful reference for cities and project proponents throughout the river corridor.

a financially feasible plan



THE SAN GABRIEL RIVER MASTER PLAN COMPLEMENTS and integrates other planning efforts. Funders are much more likely to appropriate money to projects in a comprehensive plan than they would be to individual, disconnected plans.

The County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works (DPW) and the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) are working together to pursue projects of mutual interest. The RMC is a state agency whose primary objective is to protect open space and habitat in the San Gabriel River Watershed.

DPW will focus on projects related to flood management, water quality and conservation, and groundwater recharge; the RMC will focus on projects related to open space, habitat and recreation.

The Master Plan identifies many potential State, Federal, regional, county, city and private sector funding sources, such as:

- LA County Safe Neighborhoods Parks Act— Proposition A

- Funds from recently enacted Park, Open Space, Water Quality, and Environmental Restoration Statewide Propositions 12, 13, 40 and 50
- Rivers and Mountains Conservancy grant programs
- State Coastal Conservancy's Urban Waterfronts Program, Public Access Grant Program, and Watershed Restoration Program
- Caltrans Stormwater Pollution Mitigation
- Metropolitan Transportation Authority Bicycle/Trails Program
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation— Native Plant Conservation Initiative
- South Coast Air Quality Management District



coordinated planning efforts

The San Gabriel River Master Plan targets the main stem of the river, while other planning efforts focus on the entire watershed or on sub-watersheds. The Master Plan will coordinate all plans, providing a comprehensive river corridor planning program.

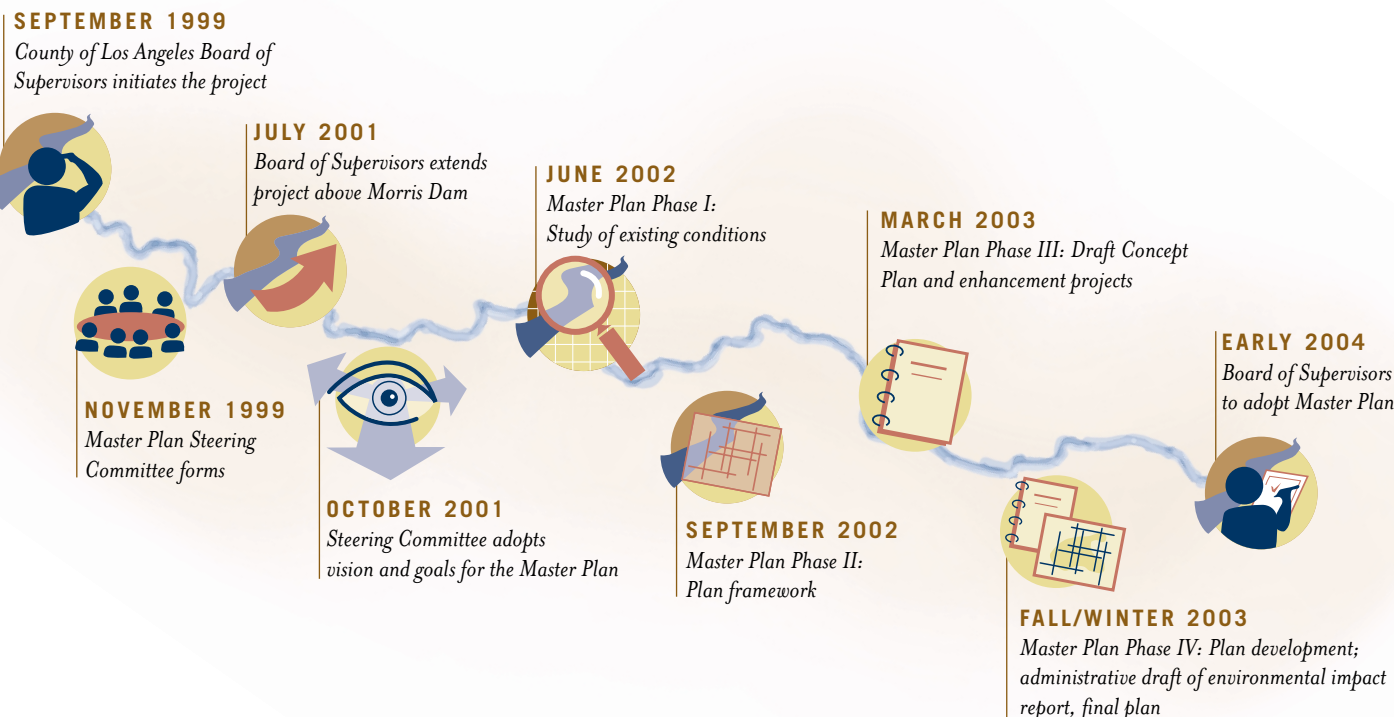
recent planning studies

- **Reconnecting the San Gabriel Valley**, California State University at Pomona, Graduate Studio Project, 6/2000
- **Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Feasibility Study**, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District, 7/2001
- **Common Ground From the Mountains to the Sea**, San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC), and Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, 10/2001
- **San Gabriel Confluence Park**, CSU Pomona, 6/2002

current planning activities

- **River/Tributaries Parkway Plan**, RMC
- **Watershed Management Plan for the San Gabriel River Above Whittier Narrows**, San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy
- **Coyote Creek Watershed Plan**, Orange County
- **Rio Hondo Watershed Management Plan**, San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments
- **San Gabriel River Watershed NPS Pollution Reduction Program**, Upper San Gabriel Municipal Water District
- **Water Quality Assessment of the San Gabriel River**, Southern California Coastal Water Research Project

master plan timeline



The San Gabriel River Master Plan Steering Committee

Planning Team

County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works Watershed Management Division

County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning

County of Los Angeles Department of Parks & Recreation

San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy

National Park Service—Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program

Represented Agencies & Organizations

Aera Energy

American Society of
Landscape Architects

Assemblymember Calderon

Assemblymember Chavez

Assemblymember Margett

Assemblymember Havice

Audubon Society

Azusa Canyon Off Roaders Association

California American Water Company

California Department of Fish
and Game

California Department of
Parks and Recreation

California Department of Water
Resources

California Exotic Pest Control

California Regional Water Quality
Control Board

California State Parks

Caltrans

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

Congresswoman Solis

County Sanitation Districts of Los
Angeles County

County of Los Angeles Department of
Health Services

County of Los Angeles Sheriffs
Department

Downey Fly Fishers

Equestrian Trails Incorporated

Fisheries Resource Volunteer Corps

Fly Fishers Club of Orange County

Friends of the San Gabriel River

Gateway Cities Council of
Government

Hanson Aggregates West

Inland Valley Land Trust

Los Angeles and San Gabriel
Rivers Watershed Council

Los Angeles City Bicycle Coalition

Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition

Los Angeles County Metropolitan
Transportation Authority

Los Cerritos Wetlands Task Force

Main San Gabriel Basin Watermaster

Metropolitan Water District

North East Trees

Orange County

Puente Hills Landfill Native Habitat
Preservation Authority

San Gabriel Mountains Regional
Conservancy

San Gabriel River Water Committee

San Gabriel River Watermaster

San Gabriel Valley Council of
Governments

San Gabriel Valley Gun Club

San Gabriel Valley Mosquito and
Vector Control District

San Gabriel Valley Protective
Association

San Gabriel Valley Water
Association

Senator Romero

Sierra Club

South Coast Wildlands Project

Southeast Water Coalition

Southern California Edison

Surfrider Foundation

Three Valleys Municipal
Water District

Trust for Public Land

United Rock Products Corporation

Upper San Gabriel Valley
Municipal Water District

US Army Corps of Engineers

US Fish and Wildlife Service

US Forest Service—Angeles
National Forest

Vulcan Materials

Water Replenishment District

West and Central Basin Municipal
Water District

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cyclist, page 2; cyclist, page 4; three
cyclists, page 11.

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los angeles county watershed management

The County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works Watershed Management Division was formed in August 2000. It has led the San Gabriel River Master Plan development, generating partnerships and working closely with all the community representatives and public agencies. The Division integrates programs in the entire county for flood protection, management of natural resources, water conservation, preserving and creating open space for recreation and habitat, reducing pollution, and efforts to improve the quality of stormwater runoff and groundwater.



County of Los Angeles
Watershed Management

for more information

Please visit the DPW Watershed Management Division's website for the San Gabriel River Master Plan at www.ladpw.org/pln/sgrmp. We will update this site as the Master Plan proceeds. Contact the San Gabriel River Watershed Manager at (626) 458-4304.



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



County of Los Angeles
Department of Regional Planning



County of Los Angeles
Department of Parks & Recreation



State of California
Rivers and Mountains Conservancy



National Park Service—
Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program



County of Los Angeles