

4.10 RECREATION

4.10.1 Existing Setting

4.10.1.1 Master Plan Study Area

Regional Parks

There are four recreation areas of regional significance in the Master Plan area: Angeles National Forest, Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area, Whittier Narrows Recreation Area, and El Dorado Regional Park (see Figure M2-05, Chapter 2.3 of the Master Plan).

Angeles National Forest. The Angeles National Forest is managed by the U.S. Forest Service, and covers over 650,000 acres of the San Gabriel Mountains, including the headwaters of the San Gabriel River. It provides a wide range of recreational activities including hiking, backpacking, camping, picnicking, fishing, off-roading, gold-panning, swimming and other water sports. Within the Master Plan area, fishing is permitted from a limited portion of the shoreline of San Gabriel Reservoir (no watercraft access permitted) and on the West Fork and its tributaries (limited to “catch and release” from the second bridge upstream of Highway 39 to Cogswell Reservoir). Recreational access to Morris Reservoir and Cogswell Reservoir are currently not permitted.

Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area (Irwindale). The Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area is a 836-acre park operated by County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation. It includes a 70-acre lake for sailing, swimming, and fishing, biking and hiking trails, picnic areas, and campsites. North of the lake is a 400-acre natural area. The San Gabriel River Bike Trail runs through the park from the San Gabriel Mountains to the coast.

Whittier Narrows Recreation Area (South El Monte). Whittier Narrows Recreation Area is operated by the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation and the City of Pico Rivera. The 1,400-acre park provides fishing lakes, picnic areas, playgrounds, an equestrian facility, trails, a multi-purpose athletic complex, a military museum, soccer fields, volleyball courts, and archery, skeet, pistol and trap ranges. The park also includes the 320-acre Whittier Narrows Nature Center, which consists of over 200 acres of natural woodland including four lakes that provide habitat for migrating waterfowl. The Nature Center building is located on a 0.5-acre parcel, and has a museum with displays of animal and plant life, a small gift shop and a library. The Nature Center staff conduct recreational and educational programs such as hay rides, lectures, ranger tours, and school field trips (LACDPR, 2003).

El Dorado Regional Park (Long Beach). El Dorado Regional Park is operated by the City of Long Beach. The 500-acre park is bordered on the west by the San Gabriel River and on the east by the 605 Freeway. The park includes the El Dorado Nature Center, community gardens, an archery range, six lakes and several man-made streams, picnic areas, play equipment, a campground, trails, a glider flying area, and a model sailboat area. The El Dorado Golf Course, also operated by the City, is located adjacent to the park.

Section 4.10 – Recreation

San Gabriel River Bike Trail

The San Gabriel River Bike Trail (Bike Trail) is a 39-mile trail that extends along most of the San Gabriel River throughout the Master Plan study area from Azusa to Long Beach (see Figure M2-03, Chapter 2.3 of the Master Plan). There are over 30 access points to the Bike Trail, typically off of street intersections, bridge crossings or local parks. For the most part, the Bike Trail is separated from the river channel by a fence. In addition to recreational uses (hiking and biking), the Bike Trail is used by LADPW and other agencies as an access road for maintenance of facilities located in the river channel. In most areas, the paved Bike Trail is accompanied by a parallel unpaved trail used by equestrians and hikers; this trail (approximately 24 miles) is part of the County Department of Parks and Recreation System of Riding and Hiking Trails and is indicated as Trail No. 8, “San Gabriel River Trail” on the Riding and Hiking Trails map (LADPR, 2001). A 6-mile extension of this trail along the river from Azusa to Mount Baldy has been proposed by the County Department of Parks and Recreation (proposed trail No. 33) (T. Lay, pers. comm., 2004; LADPR, 2001).

The Bike Trail is connected to several other trails in the region, including: the Van Tassel Trail (connects at the north end of the Bike Trail in Azusa), the San Jose Creek Bike Trail (connects near the River confluence with San Jose Creek), the Schabarum Trail (connects at Whittier Narrows and extends eastward through Puente Hills), the Rio Hondo Trail (connects at Whittier Narrows and extends southwest to the Los Angeles River Bike Trail), and the Coyote Creek Bike Trail (connects near the River confluence with Coyote Creek and extends along the creek).

Local Parks and Other Recreational Facilities

Over 30 community and neighborhood parks are located within the Master Plan study area (see Figure M2-05, Chapter 2.3 of the Master Plan). Most of these parks are operated by local municipalities, and are less than 15 acres in size. Other recreational facilities in the Master Plan study area include golf courses and equestrian centers. Based on a comparative analysis of park distribution and population density, communities in the Master Plan study area that appear to have insufficient number of parks include Baldwin Park, El Monte, Pico Rivera, West Whittier-Los Nietos, Bellflower, and Long Beach (see Chapter 2.3.3 of the Master Plan).

4.10.1.2 Concept Design Study Sites

San Gabriel Canyon Spreading Grounds

The Concept Design Study site for the San Gabriel Canyon Spreading Grounds is located within the City of Azusa. The site currently includes public facilities (spreading grounds operated by LADPW; water tanks, wells, and pumps operated by City of Azusa) and is bordered by a portion of the San Gabriel River Bike Trail to the northwest.

In June 2003, the City of Azusa published the Final Draft Recreation, Parks, Green Space, and Family Services Master Plan (Azusa Recreation Master Plan), which identifies the City’s priorities for parks and recreation programs and facilities. The Plan is intended to be an implementation tool of the City of Azusa General Plan Update (currently in the draft stage), providing a guide for the development and/or management of recreation and community services,

programs, and facilities for the City (City of Azusa, 2003b). The Draft General Plan Update establishes a goal of providing a minimum of 3.5 acres of local parkland per 1,000 residents. A comparative analysis of population and existing parks acreage shows that the City would require approximately 100 acres of additional park land to achieve this goal (City of Azusa, 2003b).

Two of the future recreation opportunities identified in the Azusa Recreation Master Plan are related to the Concept Design Study for the San Gabriel Canyon Spreading Grounds. One is the “Net Development Site,” which is a City-owned 1-acre parcel of vacant land adjacent to the Concept Design Study site. The Azusa Recreation Master Plan identifies this site as a potential bicycle path rest area and trailhead park. The other is the “Reservoir area,” which refers to the open space area surrounding the spreading grounds. Potential improvements identified in the Azusa Recreation Master Plan for this area include passive recreation opportunities such as trails, benches, interpretive plantings, and picnicking.

Woodland Duck Farm

The Concept Design Study site for the Woodland Duck Farm site includes currently vacant land (former duck farm site containing remnant structures) and the Rio San Gabriel Equestrian Center, which is used primarily for boarding horses. About one-third of the Woodland Duck Farm site is located within the City of Industry. The rest is in unincorporated Los Angeles County (community of Basset).

Since land uses in the City of Industry are primarily industrial, and the city has a very small residential population, the City currently has no plans to increase recreational areas within the city proper. However, the City supports efforts by the surrounding communities to provide additional recreational areas (J. Ballas, pers. comm., 2003).

As identified in the Los Angeles County General Plan, the County’s overall goal with respect to recreation is “to improve opportunities for a variety of outdoor recreational experiences” (Los Angeles County, 1993a). Recreation policies outlined in the County General Plan are:

- Provide low intensity outdoor recreation in areas of scenic and ecological value compatible with protection of these natural resources.
- Develop local parks in urban areas as part of urban revitalization projects, wherever possible.
- Encourage improved public transportation to recreation sites.
- Develop a system of bikeways, scenic highways, and riding and hiking trails; link recreational facilities where possible.
- Encourage safe conversion of sanitary landfills for recreational use when no longer needed for waste disposal.
- Support the provision of appropriate areas for off-road recreational vehicles, so as to reduce their impact on environmentally sensitive areas.
- Actively participate in the planning for acquisition and development of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Strongly encourage Congress to

Section 4.10 – Recreation

maintain a funding level adequate to meet the objectives of the National Recreation Area legislation.

- Support improved public access to coastal recreation areas, including the Channel Islands, consistent with protecting marine and land environments.

San Gabriel River Discovery Center at Whittier Narrows

The Concept Design Study site for the San Gabriel River Discovery Center is located in the Whittier Narrows Nature Center, which is part of the Whittier Narrows Dam Recreation Area. The Nature Center includes recreational/educational facilities and public facilities (Lario Creek, a water conveyance feature operated by LADPW). The project site is within unincorporated Los Angeles County. Therefore, the Los Angeles County General Plan recreation policies discussed above for the Woodland Duck Farm site also apply to these two Concept Design Studies.

Lario Creek

The Concept Design Study site for Lario Creek is located adjacent to the San Gabriel River Discovery Center project site discussed above. While it flows through the Whittier Narrows Nature Center, Lario Creek is a water conveyance feature used by LADPW to divert water from the San Gabriel River to the Rio Hondo, and is not a recreational facility.

El Dorado Regional Park

The Concept Design Study site for the El Dorado Regional Park is located in the City of Long Beach. The City of Long Beach General Plan Open Space and Recreation Element (City of Long Beach, 2002) establishes the City's recreation open space standard as 8 acres per 1,000 residents. Based on year 2000 census data and the existing acreage of recreation open space, the ratio of recreation open space acreage to population is 5.6 acres per 1,000 residents. To meet the target of 8 acres per 1,000 residents, the City needs approximately 1,080 acres of additional recreation open space (City of Long Beach, 2002).

4.10.2 Significance Criteria

Project impacts related to recreation would be considered significant if the project:

- Increases the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated

4.10.3 Impacts of Adopting the Master Plan Elements

The Master Plan includes six plan elements (also called Master Plan goals), set forth as the CEQA project objectives for the Master Plan. The plan elements are supported by objectives and performance criteria (see **Section 3.3.1**). The adoption of the Master Plan by the County of Los Angeles (and other municipalities in the study area) will promote implementation of projects that are consistent with these Master Plan goals. This section describes the overall Master Plan impacts based on a qualitative assessment of reasonably foreseeable effects of the adoption of the

Master Plan. Since projects similar to the Concept Design Studies are proposed throughout the river corridor, the Concept Design Study impacts (**Section 4.10.4**) further illustrate the types of potential impacts expected from implementation of the overall Master Plan.

As described below in **Table 4.10-1**, adoption of the Master Plan could result in both beneficial and potentially adverse impacts. Adverse impacts are associated with temporary closures or access restrictions at existing recreational facilities during construction of new facilities (e.g., stormwater retention basins) or modification of the recreational facilities proposed as part of projects implemented to meet the Master Plan goals. Site-specific impacts on existing recreational facilities would be addressed in second-tier CEQA documentation for future projects developed in a manner consistent with the Master Plan (see **Section 4.10.5**). Site-specific mitigation measures, if necessary, will be identified and implemented by the specific lead agencies for each future project in the Master Plan study area. Overall, adoption of the Master Plan would result in beneficial impacts on recreation by promoting projects that include new or improved recreational facilities (e.g., parks, biking/hiking/equestrian trails, and new or improved access points to existing facilities).

**Table 4.10-1
Impacts on Recreation from Adopting the Master Plan Elements**

Master Plan Elements	Impacts on Recreation	Impact Summary
<p>Habitat Element: Preserve and enhance habitat systems through public education, connectivity and balance with other uses</p>	<p>Beneficial: Adoption of this element would encourage preservation and enhancement of open space, a beneficial impact on passive recreational activities such as bird watching and wildlife appreciation.</p> <p>Neutral: This element includes objectives and performance criteria that are neutral with respect to impacts on recreation (e.g., establishment of habitat area design standards and identification of indicator species).</p> <p>Potentially Adverse: Habitat enhancement that involves active restoration (e.g., extensive removal of existing vegetation and replanting with high-value, native vegetation) in or near existing recreational facilities could temporarily reduce public access to the facilities. Implementation of MP-R1 would reduce this impact by modification of construction schedules to minimize the duration of closure and/or to avoid peak use periods.</p>	<p>Potentially significant for construction impacts at existing recreational facilities; less than significant with mitigation</p> <p>Beneficial for operations-related effects (no adverse impacts)</p>
<p>Recreation Element: Encourage and enhance safe and diverse recreation systems, while providing for expansion, equitable and sufficient access, balance and multi-purpose uses</p>	<p>Beneficial: Adoption of this element would encourage development of and enhancement of recreational facilities and improve access to those facilities.</p> <p>Potentially Adverse: Projects that involve modifications of existing recreational facilities could temporarily reduce public access to the facilities. Implementation of MP-R1 would reduce this impact by modification of construction schedules to minimize the duration of closure and/or to avoid peak use periods.</p>	<p>Potentially significant for construction impacts at existing recreational facilities; less than significant with mitigation</p> <p>Beneficial for operations-</p>

Section 4.10 – Recreation

Master Plan Elements	Impacts on Recreation	Impact Summary
		related effects (no adverse impacts)
<p>Open Space Element: Enhance and protect open space systems through conservation, aesthetics, connectivity, stewardship, and multi-purpose uses.</p>	<p>Beneficial: Preservation of existing open space areas that provide for active or passive recreational uses would have beneficial impacts on recreation.</p> <p>Neutral: This element also includes objectives and performance criteria that are neutral with respect to impacts on recreation (e.g., use of drought tolerant and native plants, best management practices that support habitat and water quality goals).</p> <p>Potentially Adverse: Projects that involve modification of open space areas with existing recreational facilities could temporarily reduce public access to the facilities. Implementation of MP-R1 would reduce this impact by modification of construction schedules to minimize the duration of closure and/or to avoid peak use periods.</p>	<p>Potentially significant for construction impacts at existing recreational facilities; less than significant with mitigation</p> <p>Beneficial for operations-related effects (no adverse impacts)</p>
<p>Flood Protection Element: Maintain flood protection and existing water and other rights while enhancing flood management activities through the integration with recreation, open space and habitat systems.</p>	<p>Beneficial: Maintenance of flood protection would have beneficial impacts on recreation (e.g., protection of recreational facilities from flood damage).</p> <p>Neutral: This element also includes objectives and performance criteria that are neutral with respect to impacts on recreation (e.g., ensures liability is not increased, coordination of maintenance of flood protection system with habitat needs).</p> <p>Potentially Adverse: Construction of new flood control facilities (e.g., stormwater detention areas) in or near existing recreational facilities could temporarily reduce public access to the facilities. Implementation of MP-R1 would reduce this impact by modification of construction schedules to minimize the duration of closure and/or to avoid peak use periods.</p>	<p>Potentially significant for construction impacts at existing recreational facilities; less than significant with mitigation</p> <p>Beneficial for operations-related effects (no adverse impacts)</p>
<p>Water Supply and Water Quality Element: 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.</p>	<p>Beneficial: Construction of new facilities for enhancing water quality and/or water supply (e.g., stormwater infiltration facilities, constructed wetlands) could provide new opportunities for passive recreational activities (e.g., bird watching and wildlife appreciation).</p> <p>Neutral: This element includes objectives and performance criteria that are neutral with respect to impacts on recreation (e.g., maintains conservation of local water).</p> <p>Potentially Adverse: Construction of new facilities for enhancing water quality and/or water supply (e.g., stormwater infiltration facilities, constructed wetlands, pipelines for reclaimed water distribution) in or near existing recreational facilities could temporarily reduce public access to the facilities. Implementation of MP-R1</p>	<p>Potentially significant for construction impacts at existing recreational facilities; less than significant with mitigation</p> <p>Beneficial for operations-related effects (no adverse impacts)</p>

Master Plan Elements	Impacts on Recreation	Impact Summary
	would reduce this impact by modification of construction schedules to minimize the duration of closure and/or to avoid peak use periods.	
<p>Economic Development Element: Pursue economic development opportunities derived from and compatible with the natural aesthetic and environmental qualities of the river.</p>	<p>Beneficial: Adoption of this element would result in beneficial impacts on recreation by encouraging development of trails to and along the waterways.</p> <p>Neutral: This element promotes the pursuit of economic development opportunities which consider connectivity to the river corridor and establishment of development standards. This element also includes objectives and performance criteria that are neutral with respect to impacts on recreation (e.g., education of participating landowners about potential liability and protective measures).</p>	Beneficial (no adverse impacts)

4.10.4 Impacts of Implementing the Concept Design Studies

4.10.4.1 Construction Impacts

Three of the Master Plan Concept Design Studies (San Gabriel River Discovery Center, Lario Creek, and El Dorado Regional Park) include construction at existing recreational facilities. Construction of proposed facilities would have temporary effects on the availability of existing onsite recreational facilities.

- San Gabriel River Discovery Center and Lario Creek.** Both of these Concept Design Studies will be located within the 320-acre Whittier Narrows Nature Area. During construction of the Discovery Center building, the existing Nature Center building will be closed to visitors. In addition, up to approximately 20 acres of the Nature Center could be unavailable during construction of the proposed wetlands, modification of Lario Creek, and/or habitat restoration. If the construction activities for these two Concept Design Studies occurred in sequence, the total construction time could be up to approximately 8 months. During detailed design, a more detailed estimate of construction duration and phasing will be developed. If necessary, arrangements would be made for existing educational/recreational programs at the Nature Center to continue at an alternate location during project construction.
- El Dorado Regional Park.** Up to approximately 10 acres of undeveloped areas of the 500-acre park could be unavailable during construction. The estimated construction time for this Concept Design Study is 2 months (excluding the potential future removal of concrete from the river channel).

The areas affected during specific stages of construction would be smaller than indicated above due to phasing of construction activities. Disturbance from construction at these project sites may result in temporary increases in the use of other existing recreational facilities in the area. However, due to the small acreage of disturbance relative to the total size of the parks, any increase in usage at other nearby recreational facilities would be short-term and minimal, and is

Section 4.10 – Recreation

not expected to cause or accelerate a substantial physical deterioration of those facilities. Construction-related impacts on recreation would be less than significant.

4.10.4.2 Operational Impacts

Implementation of the Concept Design Study for the Woodland Duck Farm would contribute up to approximately 57 acres of additional park land and open space to the Master Plan study area. The other Concept Design Studies also involve new or improved recreational facilities (e.g., parks, biking/hiking/equestrian trails, and new or improved access points to existing facilities). These new facilities and enhancements will improve the quality of riding, hiking, and other recreational experiences in the Master Plan study area. Therefore, the long-term impact of the Concept Design Studies on recreational resources is beneficial (no adverse impact).

4.10.5 Master Plan Program Mitigation Measures

Future projects that include modifications of existing recreational facilities will require an evaluation of the impacts of proposed actions on other nearby recreational facilities as described in program Mitigation Measure MP-R1:

MP-R1 For projects that include modifications of existing recreational facilities, the timing, duration and areal extent of disturbance that would occur during construction of the proposed facilities will be identified during facility design. If temporary closures of existing recreational facilities would be necessary, the potential increase in use of other nearby recreational facilities will be evaluated. Factors to be considered in the evaluation include the duration of the closure, acreage and type of facility that would be unavailable due to the closure, and existing usage levels at the relevant recreational facilities.

If the impacts on nearby recreational facilities are determined to be potentially significant, one or more of the following measures will be implemented:

- Minimize construction period
- Modify construction phasing to limit disturbance of existing recreational facilities
- Avoid construction during peak use periods

4.10.6 Mitigation Measures for Concept Design Studies

Since implementation of the Concept Design Studies would not result in significant impacts on recreation, no mitigation measures are proposed.