

COMMON GROUND

from the Mountains to the Sea

Watershed and Open Space Plan

San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers

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PREFACE

Through the California Resources Agency, the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, or Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC), in conjunction with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC), jointly developed this Watershed and Open Space Plan for the San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers.

The RMC is required by legislation to prepare the parkway and open space plan addressing the San Gabriel River watershed, the lower Los Angeles River watershed, and San Gabriel Mountains, portions of which are in the upper Los Angeles River watershed. In order to effectively plan land and water conservation measures for the lower Los Angeles River, plans for the upper Los Angeles River must be addressed. Also, the Rio Hondo sub watershed connects the rivers and is integral to the function of both. Some portions of the upper Los Angeles River are included within the territory of the SMMC. Recognizing the importance of a holistic approach, the Secretary of Resources directed the RMC and SMMC to jointly develop a coordinated plan for the entire San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers watersheds.

This plan is intended to support and inform planning efforts by cities, federal, state and local agencies, communities, groups and individuals in the watershed. This includes ongoing (or pending) subwatershed plans and future plans for parks, open space, and bike trails in individual cities. The State Conservancies will encourage incorporation of the concepts embodied in the guiding principles set forth in this plan into future open space, water resource, and habitat projects, to advance restoration of the watershed.

This plan aims to extend the discussion of restoring balance between human and natural systems from beyond the rivers to the entire watershed. Every community, including those without direct connections to the rivers or tributaries, has a role to play in the creation of new open space, trails, and bike paths, the enhancement of water resources, preservation of wildlife habitat, and maintenance of flood protection. This plan is intended as a tool to build consensus and reach *common ground*.

The California Resources Agency, comprised of 27 departments, commissions, and conservancies, is responsible for the conservation, enhancement, and management of California's natural resources, including land, water, wildlife, parks, minerals, and historic sites. The Agency advises the Governor on issues related to the State's natural resources and is responsible for interpreting the California Environmental Quality Act. The RMC and SMMC both report to the Resources Agency.

The RMC was created in 1999 to preserve urban open space and habitat for the enjoyment of, and appreciation by, present and future generations. To fulfill that mission, the RMC will undertake projects that provide low-impact recreation, education, wildlife and habitat restoration, and watershed improvements, prioritizing river-related recreation, greening, aesthetic improvements, and wildlife habitat.

The SMMC was established in 1980 to acquire land and operate programs for conservation, parkland, and recreation purposes. The SMMC's objectives are guided by the goals of creating an inter-linking network of parks and trails, preserving critical wildlife habitat and ensuring open space and recreation lands in Los Angeles and Ventura counties for the future of all Southern California residents. The mission of the SMMC is to strategically buy back, preserve, protect, restore, and enhance treasured pieces of Southern California to form an interlinking system of urban, rural, and river parks; open space; trails; and wildlife habitats that are easily accessible to the general public.

A number of public agencies, by virtue of their missions, are currently partners with the State Conservancies and will partner with the Conservancies throughout the life of the plan. The mission statements of these partner agencies are listed below.

■ U.S. Forest Service

Caring for the land and serving people.

■ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

To provide quality, responsive engineering services to the nation including:

- Planning, designing building, operating water resources and other civil works projects
- Designing and managing the construction of military facilities for the Army and Air Force
- Providing design and construction management support for other Defense and federal agencies

■ U.S. National Park Service

To preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

■ California Department of Parks and Recreation

To provide for the health, inspiration, and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the State's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

■ California Coastal Conservancy

- Improves public access to the coast and bay shores by acquiring land and easements and by building trails and stairways; it also seeks to create low-cost accommodations along the coast, including campgrounds and hostels.
- Protects and enhances coastal wetlands, streams and watersheds
- Restores urban waterfronts for public use and coastal dependent industries, especially commercial fishing
- Resolves coastal land use conflicts
- Acquires and holds environmentally valuable coastal lands for purposes that are in keeping with the Coastal Act
- Protects agricultural lands
- Accepts donations and dedications of land easements for public access, agriculture, open space, and habitat protection

■ California Department of Fish and Game

To manage California's diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, for their ecological values and for their use and enjoyment by the public.

■ California Wildlife Conservation Board

To select, authorize, and allocate funds for the purchase of land and waters suitable for the preservation, protection, and restoration of wildlife habitat.

■ California Department of Transportation

To improve mobility across California.

■ Los Angeles and Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Boards

To preserve and enhance California's water resources and ensure their proper allocation and efficient use for the benefit of present and future generations.

■ Los Angeles County Department of Public Works

To integrate natural resources, stormwater and water conservation and management of high quality stormwater to increase protection of our communities and obtain a higher quality of life for the citizens of our county.

■ Orange County Planning and Development Services

To provide, operate, and maintain quality public facilities and regional resources for the enjoyment, mobility, protection, and business of the people in Orange County.