

PRESS RELEASE



SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

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Supervisor Gloria Molina, Los Angeles City Council President Eric Garcetti, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority Dedicate First Clean Water Natural Park on the Los Angeles River.

Marsh Park demonstrates the most simple, cost-effective way to clean pollutants before they enter the waterways that lead to our beaches, while bringing nature back into our neighborhoods, and creating public parkland.

Los Angeles—A new park opened today in the industrial and residential Elysian Valley neighborhood abutting the natural streambed portion of the Los Angeles River near downtown Los Angeles. At a well-attended dedication ceremony near the river banks, Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina, Los Angeles City Council President Eric Garcetti, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) celebrated the collaboration of many levels of government and community members that led to the creation of the first of many planned clean water parks along the Los Angeles River.

"I am immensely pleased that Marsh Street Park is open to the public just in time for spring," said Supervisor Gloria Molina who contributed \$288,000 in Los Angeles County Safe Neighborhood Safe Parks (Proposition A) funds to the development of the park. "I know that children and families from all over this neighborhood will enjoy using it. Marsh Park is an important example of government agencies working together to create effective, common sense solutions to regional problems, while improving our communities. I look forward to more projects like this in the future."

(-More-)

Each year, billions of gallons of water runs off of neighborhood streets into storm drains through an underground network of pipes that empty into the Los Angeles River and, eventually, into the Pacific Ocean. As water washes along the streets it brings with it trash and other pollutants such as motor oil, brake dust, and insecticides and deposits them into the river. At Marsh Park, a section of the City's concrete drainage pipe was removed from under the park. The ground was then lowered so that dirty water coming from the storm drains will slowly soak into the ground during a natural cleansing process known as infiltration. Trash and other pollutants are removed before the water enters the river. The system worked perfectly during this week's recent storm event. Rainwater was temporarily collected on-site, then seeped slowly into the earth.

Another benefit of this system is that it allows the water to soak deep into the ground between sand, rocks, and clay and replenish the natural underground water storage system known as the aquifer. In the arid climate of Los Angeles this is especially important. The park has also been planted with native marshland and upland plants, which will assist with water infiltration and encourage birds, mammals, and insects such as butterflies to inhabit the area.

"Marsh Park isn't just a beautiful place to sit down and look at the river," said Los Angeles City Council President Eric Garcetti, who represents the Elysian Valley neighborhood. "Beneath its attractive surface, it's a hard-working friend of the environment, filtering urban runoff before it gets into the river and onto our beaches."

Most professionals agree that if the water runoff from each twenty acres of paved city streets were directed to a one-acre detention and infiltration area like the one at Marsh Park, that our region's stormwater pollution problems would be permanently solved.

The park is located adjacent to the nine-mile section of the 51-mile Los Angeles River known as the Glendale Narrows that has a natural "soft bottom," instead of a concrete

floor. This allows native river plants and animals to thrive as if the river were in its natural state. With its river access and stellar view of the Verdugo Hills, the park site was a key acquisition target by the Conservancy and the MRCA in the mid-1990's in its development of the Los Angeles River Greenway and as part of the Los Angeles River Master Plan process. The land was acquired using bond funds from the Safe Drinking Water, Clean Water, Watershed Protection, and Flood Protection Act, which was approved by voters in 2000.

“Marsh Park is a model for every public property near the Los Angeles River,” said Joseph T. Edmiston, Executive Director of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. “While cleaning polluted water runoff from city streets before it goes into the river, we bring nature back into neighborhoods and create parkland and recreational opportunities in densely populated urban areas where they are needed most. Joint use, multi-benefit projects give the public the most for its money.”

The development of the park was the result of a long community outreach process. Local teenagers under the direction of the Downtown nonprofit community arts incubator, ArtShare, created the children's nature-themed play equipment, in the form of a mosaic-adorned frog, snake, and turtle. The park was constructed by the nonprofit Los Angeles Conservation Corps, which employs young adults to construct environmental enhancement and improvement projects.

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy was established by the California State Legislature in 1980. Since that time, it has helped to preserve over 55,000 acres of parkland in both wilderness and urban settings, and has improved more than 114 public recreational facilities throughout Southern California.

The MRCA is a local government public entity established in 1985 pursuant to the Joint Powers Act between the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the Conejo Recreation and Park District, and the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District.

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