

NATURAL RESOURCES & PLANNING HIGHLIGHTS

PROJECT PLANNING HIGHLIGHTS

Calleguas Creek Watershed Management Plan

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy is an active participant in Ventura County's Calleguas Creek Watershed Management Plan process. Calleguas Creek drains all of eastern Ventura County and a small portion of the Santa Susana Mountains in Los Angeles County. The project addresses watershed-wide issues of habitat and recreation, land use, water quality, water resources, flood control and sedimentation, and public outreach and education. Cities, water districts, county, state and federal agencies, agricultural and environmental organizations, park agencies, and landowners are all represented in the plan. Funding was provided by the California Coastal Conservancy and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Los Angeles River—Harvard University Design Studio

The Conservancy sponsored a semester-long studio at Harvard University Graduate School of Design (GSD) to create innovative visions for the future of the Los Angeles River. Project partners included Mia Lehrer and Associates, Landscape Architects, and Friends of the Los Angeles River. Twelve graduate students focused design alternatives on a four-mile reach of the river from its confluence with the Arroyo Seco to the City of Vernon border.

In early November 2001, the studio presented their preliminary designs to several of the project sponsors at Harvard University. Attendees included staff members from the offices of Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina, Los Angeles City Councilmember Ed Reyes, the Latino Urban Forum and the Conservancy. The results of the students' efforts were compiled into a briefing book that will be distributed to decision-makers within the watershed.



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The Legacy Project

Under the proactive sponsorship of Resources Secretary Mary D. Nichols, the California Resources Agency initiated the Legacy Project to compile unparalleled informational tools for statewide land conservation efforts. The impetus of this ambitious project was the clear need for statewide planning tools to maximize the quality and quantity of new open space lands acquired with public funding. The project is developing both guidelines and geographic information system-based mapping inventories to assist in land acquisition evaluations and funding prioritization. The project is also designed to assist other agencies and entities on their area-specific projects. Conservancy staff participated in a multi-day workshop to develop a set of acquisition prioritization criteria in the fall of 2001. The MRCA has also entered into a contract with the Resources Agency to provide staffing resources for the Legacy Project.



Santa Monica Mountains

Participation in Development of the City of Malibu Local Coastal Program

Assembly Bill 988 (Hertzberg) added Section 30166.5 to the Coastal Act, which requires the California Coastal Commission to certify a Local Coastal Program for the City of Malibu. The Local Coastal Program includes a Land Use Plan and the Local Implementation Plan, including zoning district maps and ordinances. Among other things, this program contains policies and ordinances for public access and recreation, marine and land resources, new development, and scenic and visual resources. Many complex and controversial issues were addressed in the development of this program.

Several of the Conservancy's parks, open space properties and easements are located partially or entirely within the City of Malibu, including Corral Canyon Park, Ramirez Canyon Park, Escondido Canyon Natural Area, and the recently acquired Tuna Canyon Park. The Conservancy provided numerous comment letters and public testimony over a five-month period. The Conservancy continues to coordinate with the California Coastal Commission regarding the implications of this plan for acquisition, management, and improvements of public parks and open space lands in the City of Malibu.

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Parklands and Open Space Map

In March of 2002 the Conservancy released a comprehensive map showing the location of all public open space, watershed lands, and protected, private open space in the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor and Santa Monica Mountains Zone. The map shows an area stretching from the Los Padres National Forest to South Central Los Angeles and from the Antelope Valley to the Oxnard Plain. The visually stunning front side of the map provides a view of many newly available parklands. Symbols depict numerous trailheads, scenic overlook locations, and critical wildlife movement corridors between mountain ranges. The reverse side of the map provides a comprehensive guide and explanation of the recreational and ecological resources within Conservancy and MRCA parks. Vivid photographs and map insets give local residents and visitors alike a resource of quality and utility.

South Coast Wildlands Project—Missing Linkages

The South Coast Wildlands Project is an unprecedented, privately-spearheaded effort to identify means to protect, enhance and re-establish connections between the large open space areas of the South Coast Ecoregion. This ecoregion extends along the coast from Ventura County to San Diego County and as far inland as Palm Springs. The marquee project of the South Coast Wildlands Project is its “Missing Linkages” effort. This was initiated at a November 2000 workshop in San Diego that identified hundreds of critical wildlife corridors or missing linkages statewide. This fiscal year, the Project focused on compiling vital mapping and biological information. The publication from the 2000 workshop, entitled, “Missing Linkages: Restoring Connectivity to the California Landscape,” describes numerous missing linkages in the Santa Monica Mountains and Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor Zones as being both the most important and imperiled in California. Conservancy and MRCA staff are responsible for compiling information on the majority of these connections.



Santa Clara River

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Arroyo Seco Watershed Restoration Feasibility Study

In cooperation with the State Coastal Conservancy, the Conservancy provided technical assistance and funding to the Arroyo Seco Watershed Restoration Feasibility Study, conducted by North East Trees and the Arroyo Seco Foundation. The study's final report, released in May 2002, lays the foundation for stream restoration and park projects along the Arroyo Seco. The project team studied the historic landscape and hydrology of the area, analyzed current conditions, and presented a multitude of projects that would improve environmental conditions. Projects addressed stream restoration, flood protection, habitat restoration, drinking water supply, water quality, and recreational open space. The Conservancy's current projects along the Arroyo Seco meet the goals and recommendations of this study.



Arroyo Seco

Arroyo Seco Parkway Scenic Corridor Management Plan



The Arroyo Seco Parkway, also known as the 110 or Pasadena Freeway, was recently designated a National Scenic Byway. The Conservancy is working with the California Department of Transportation, the Highland Park Heritage Trust and the National Trust for Historic Preservation to identify ways to restore and improve the parkway and the surrounding corridor lands.

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URBAN PARKS

Marsh Street Park

Acquired in fiscal year 2000-2001, the 5.4-acre Marsh Street property provides over 700 feet of river frontage and is adjacent to the natural streambed portion of the Los Angeles River. This large parcel offers opportunities for a variety of activities and restoration of native habitat. The river frontage will be planted and developed in coordination with Los Angeles County's Los Angeles River Bikeway project.

The Conservancy coordinated with community members and representatives from the Thirteenth Los Angeles City Council District to achieve consensus on the design of the first phase of park development. For this phase, a vacant building and parking lot were demolished. Ultimately, this area will contain an access path to the Los Angeles River Bikeway as well as native landscape plantings and picnicking amenities.



Confluence Park

The Confluence Park project proposes to connect potential and existing open space surrounding the I-5/SR 110 interchange at the confluence of the Los Angeles River and the Arroyo Seco. The Conservancy's goal is to provide regional and community attractions and to create multi-modal links between the Los Angeles River, Taylor Yard, and Arroyo Seco Bikeways. Project partners include the California Department of Transportation, the County of Los Angeles, and the United States Geologic Survey.

The Conservancy granted funds to North East Trees for a study of recreational opportunity sites in the confluence area. The study's results will help to address the needs for active recreation sites and demonstrate how passive nature parks will complement those sites.

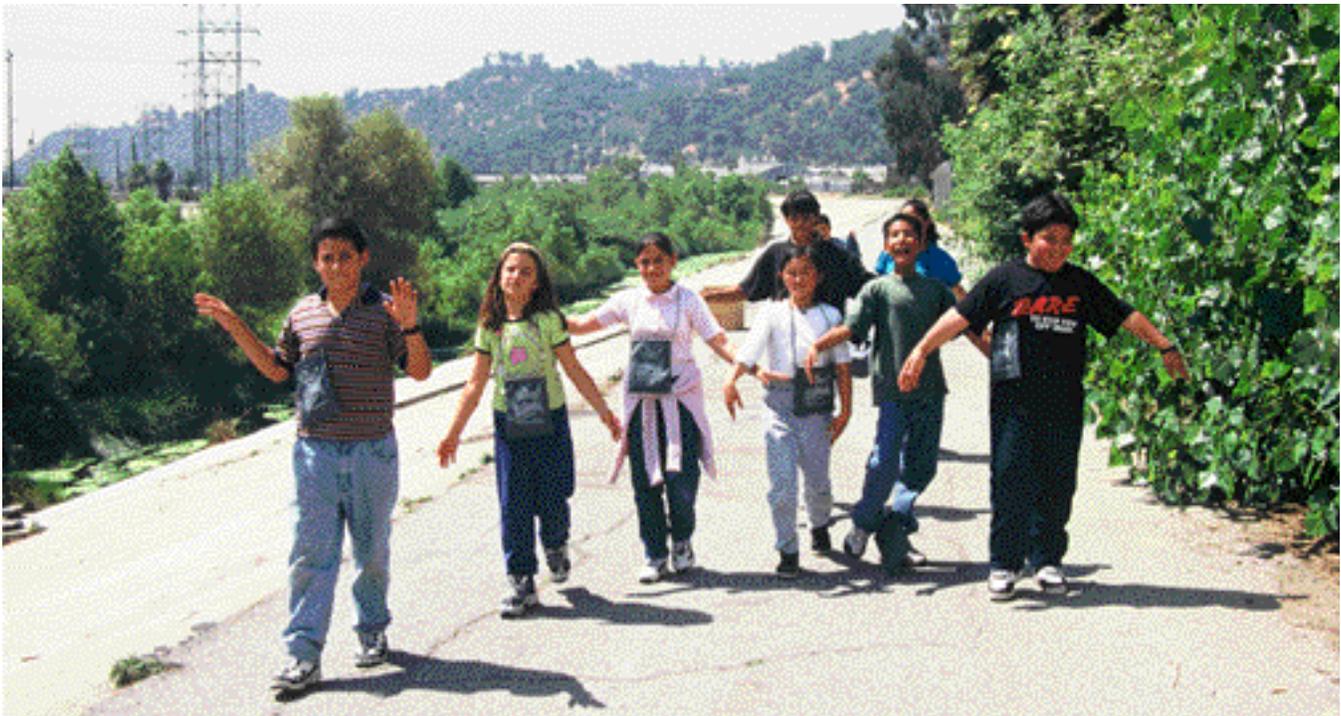
In April 2002 MRCA granted funds to the Los Angeles Conservation Corps to assist in acquiring two key parcels on the south and west corners of Figueroa Street and San Fernando Road from the City of Los Angeles.

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URBAN PARKS

Artesian Park

On Avenue 35 and Pasadena Avenue in the City of Los Angeles, industrial brownfield parcels have been identified for potential park use. Named for a local street and the abundance of natural springs in the watershed, Artesian Park will provide connections to pedestrian and bicycle paths. The Arroyo Seco Bikeway, a County of Los Angeles project, will be accessed directly from Artesian Park, and a pedestrian bridge that spans the Arroyo Seco Parkway will also link to the park. The pedestrian bridge is frequently used by local schoolchildren. The Conservancy is diligently working toward cleaning up these industrial parcels and making them accessible to the public.



Los Angeles River Rangers

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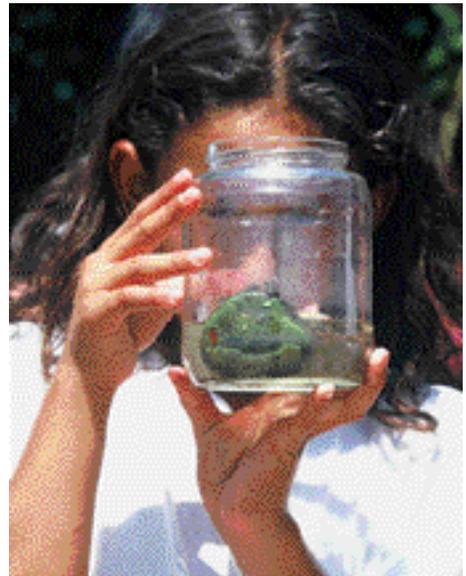
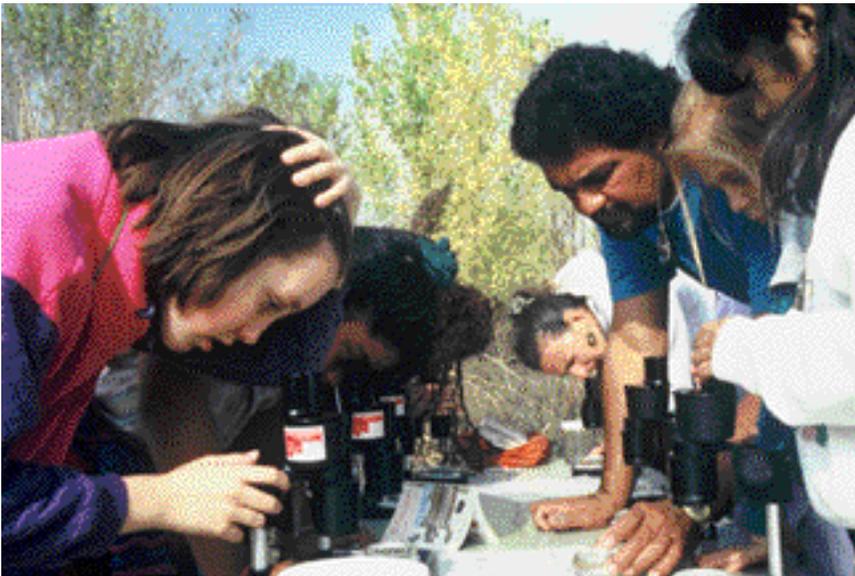
URBAN PARKS

Zanja Madre Park

The Conservancy is planning park development on eight acres above the California Department of Parks and Recreation Cornfields site adjacent to the Chinatown community. The property contains an archeological remnant of Los Angeles' original irrigation ditch, the *zanja madre*. A report on conceptual design opportunities was completed in October 2001 in cooperation with Friends of the Los Angeles River.

Richard Lillard Studio City Outdoor Classroom

On the Los Angeles River in Studio City, park development began in cooperation with the County of Los Angeles. The project includes planting native vegetation, constructing an amphitheater, stabilizing the sloped river bank, and providing a site for environmental education programs. Access to the Los Angeles River Bikeway will be provided when the project is completed.



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MITIGATION PROJECTS

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy has been a responsible steward of the lands it has owned or operated for over twenty years. Part of the Conservancy's expertise includes land improvement and habitat enhancement. Currently, the Conservancy participates in "In-Lieu Fee" programs with the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and United States Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), in which mitigation is required to offset impacts to riparian habitat. This In-Lieu Fee Riparian Restoration Program is administered by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA). All projects are mutually agreed upon by cooperating partners before commencement.

<i>Restoration Project Name/ Related Agencies</i>	<i>Tributary/Park Unit</i>	<i>Riparian Acres Restored</i>	<i>In-Lieu Fees</i>
<i>1. Burns Pacific Mitigation U.S. Army Corps of Engineers</i>	<i>Las Virgenes Creek Tributary</i>	<i>0.25</i>	<i>\$25,000</i>
<i>2. Liberty Canyon California Dept. of Fish & Game</i>	<i>Liberty Canyon Creek— Liberty Canyon Wildlife Corridor</i>	<i>0.25 (Completed)</i>	<i>\$24,000</i>
<i>3. Mureau Estates California Dept. of Fish & Game</i>	<i>Las Virgenes Creek Tributary</i>	<i>0.67 (Completed)</i>	<i>\$30,000</i>
<i>4. Richland Phase 1 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers</i>	<i>Las Virgenes Creek Tributary</i>	<i>0.25</i>	<i>\$18,750</i>
<i>5. Richland Phase 2 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers</i>	<i>Liberty Canyon Creek— Liberty Canyon Wildlife Corridor—South</i>	<i>0.25</i>	<i>\$18,750</i>
<i>6. Richland Phase 3 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers</i>	<i>Liberty Canyon Creek— Liberty Canyon Wildlife Corridor—North</i>	<i>0.25</i>	<i>\$18,750</i>
<i>7. Richland Phase 4 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers</i>	<i>Liberty Canyon Creek— Liberty Canyon Wildlife Corridor—South</i>	<i>0.25</i>	<i>\$18,750</i>
<i>8. Corral Canyon Mitigation California Dept. of Fish & Game</i>	<i>Corral Creek Corral Canyon Park</i>	<i>0.35</i>	<i>\$35,000</i>

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Bosque del Rio Hondo

The Rio Hondo flows into the Los Angeles River. The MRCA is involved in two smaller riparian restoration projects on small tributaries of the Rio Hondo located immediately south of the Whittier Narrows Recreation Area. Both restoration sites directly benefit the MRCA managed Bosque del Rio Hondo Natural Area and its wildlife. These two projects have turned approximately one quarter-acre of a disturbed, weed-choked flood plain into budding riparian woodlands with native cottonwood, sycamore, oak, elderberry and walnut trees underlain by native roses and blackberry.



Liberty Canyon

The MRCA's most successful restoration projects have been in the middle of the Liberty Canyon inter-mountain range wildlife corridor. This is the most critical land connection between the Simi Hills and the Santa Monica Mountains across the Ventura (101) Freeway. The sections of the corridor adjacent to the freeway are narrow and highly disturbed. Four separate riparian habitat restoration projects have focused on maximizing forest and understory vegetation cover in the drainage courses that wind through this wildlife movement chokepoint. Each is designed to optimize the function of the wildlife corridor and to provide resources for resident species. The first of these projects pulled hundreds of cubic yards of fill dirt away from a deeply incised creek channel to create thousands of square feet of moist stream channel habitat. This project exceeded its five year success requirements in three years and has been signed off by the California Department of Fish and Game.

