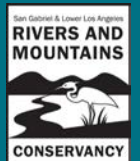


# LOS ANGELES RIVER RANGER PROGRAM ESTABLISHMENT PLAN

May 24, 2019



## Steering Committee

Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon's office (AD 63)  
Assemblymember Cristina Garcia's office (AD 58)  
California State Parks  
Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation  
Los Angeles County Department of Public Works  
San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy  
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy  
Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority  
Watershed Conservation Authority

## Stakeholder Committee Members

### Cities

Bell  
Bell Gardens  
Burbank  
Carson  
Commerce  
Compton  
Cudahy  
Downey  
Glendale  
Huntington Park  
Long Beach  
Los Angeles  
Lynwood  
Maywood  
Montebello  
Paramount  
Pasadena  
Pico Rivera  
San Fernando  
South Gate  
South Pasadena  
Vernon

### Governmental Organizations

California Conservation Corps  
California State Parks  
LA County Department of Parks and Recreation  
LA Department of Public Works  
Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority  
Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority  
San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy  
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy  
State Lands Commission  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
Watershed Conservation Authority

### Non-Governmental Organizations

Amigos de los Rios  
Arroyo Seco Foundation  
Conservation Corps of Long Beach  
Friends of the LA River  
From Lot to Spot  
LA Conservation Corps  
LA County Bike Coalition  
Mujeres de la Tierra  
North East Trees  
Pacoima Beautiful  
River LA  
The River Project  
Trails4All  
TreePeople

Prepared by PlaceWorks



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*The River Ranger Plan defines a unified program for making the Los Angeles River safer and more inviting.*

The Los Angeles River Ranger Program Establishment Plan (River Ranger Plan) was developed in response to Assembly Bill 1558 (C. Garcia) Los Angeles River: River Ranger Program, which required the development of a program to provide a network of river rangers who assist the public at sites along the Los Angeles River (LA River or River) and its tributaries. The bill was enacted in 2017 to address river-adjacent communities' limited contact with and responsibility for the River, as well as coordinate with current revitalization plans working to enhance the River to increase its ecological, social, and recreational opportunities.

The River Ranger Plan was developed by a stakeholder-driven process. The planning process was led by two State Conservancies with Los Angeles River jurisdiction and their respective Joint Powers Authorities (JPAs). Additionally, two advisory groups were established to guide the development of the Plan: the Steering Committee and the Stakeholder Committee.

The River Ranger Plan defines a unified program that is responsive to the unique needs and conditions of the River's diverse reaches.

As the River Ranger Program is implemented, the perception of the LA River as a rich community and environmental asset will continue to grow. Furthermore, the River Ranger Program can emerge as a new model for both multi-jurisdictional collaboration and community-based revitalization around River awareness and education. This Executive Summary provides an overview of the planning process and describes recommended Program components.

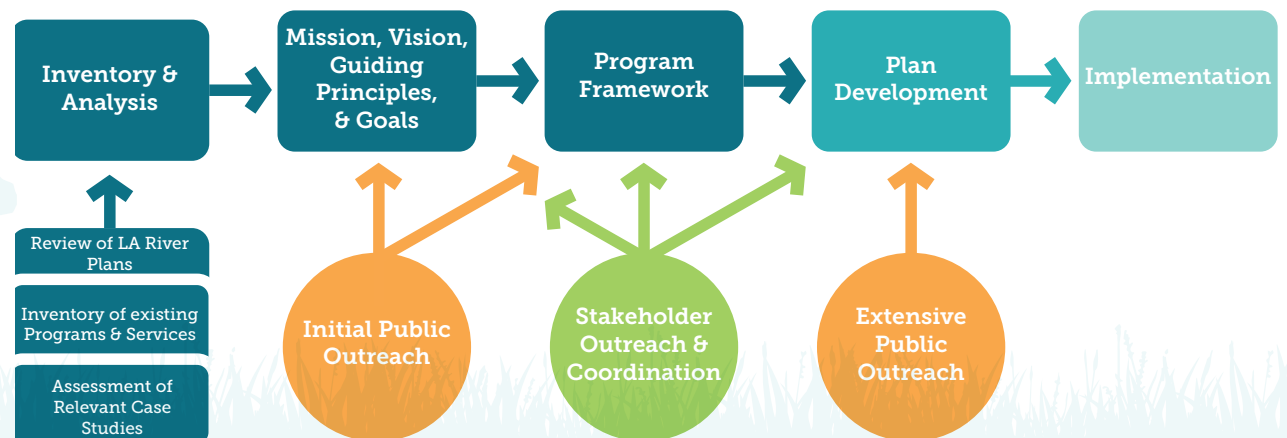
## Project Leads:

- San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC)
- Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC)

Funded by:



## Planning Process







# ENVISIONING THE PROGRAM

## MISSION

The mission of the River Ranger Program is to foster connections between communities, agencies, and resources to promote safe, equitable usage and stewardship of the LA River and its tributaries as an activated and connected greenway that supports ecological, social, and recreational opportunities.

## VISION

*How the River Ranger Program and a revitalized river will impact communities in the future...*

As the river is being revitalized and embraced as a community resource, the River Ranger Program will ensure safe, enjoyable and equitable experiences along the LA River and its tributaries by promoting equitable access, recreational and educational opportunities, community engagement, and resource protection along this vital resource. The River Ranger Program will provide opportunities to experience the River as a safe and inviting place, and to participate in its enhancement through volunteer or employment programs.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1

#### Resource Management and Maintenance

Natural, cultural, and built resources along the Los Angeles River provide multiple environmental and community benefits; these resources will be protected, maintained, enhanced, and interpreted for the public to ensure that the River is a safe and enjoyable place to visit.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2

#### Recreation and Interpretation/Educational Programs

The Los Angeles River will continue to serve as an outdoor classroom that provides resources and experiences that build understanding and inspire appreciation of the river's ecology, history, and community benefits, as well as an experiential landscape that offers active and passive recreational opportunities that respond to the varying physical conditions along the River.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLE 3

#### Outreach and Engagement

All visitors will be encouraged to utilize the River, and provided information and resources to ensure safe and resource-sensitive use.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLE 4

#### Public Safety

Designated access points, trails, parks and open spaces along the Los Angeles River will be inviting and safe for visitors to enjoy.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLE 5

#### Administration and Coordination

Coordination and collaboration among agencies with jurisdiction over the River, organizations that provide services and programs, and members of the public is essential to providing dependable services that enhance the river as a natural and community resource. The River Ranger Program will act as a central conduit to bring together all parties involved.

# PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

The consistent, dependable presence of a River Ranger Program along the 51-mile River and its tributaries will foster a new era for the River, building upon and supporting the cumulative revitalization efforts. By ensuring maintenance and protection of natural resources and accessible features, and offering diverse recreational and educational programs that reflect community interest and unique site conditions, staff (grown from local communities) and partners will help to redefine the LA River as a safe and inviting community and environmental asset.

Meeting the actual and perceived needs identified by community and stakeholder feedback and fulfilling the various service area roles will require a multifaceted delivery approach. This will be achieved by utilizing a tiered staffing model that include Sworn California Peace Officers (referred to as Sworn Peace Officer Rangers or Rangers), Program Staff (supplemented by contracted partners), and River Stewards. River Stewards are envisioned as trainees in the workforce development program. Partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community based organizations (CBOs) will also contribute to the impact of the River Ranger Program through both contracted and volunteer efforts.



	SWORN PEACE OFFICER RANGER	PROGRAM STAFF & CONTRACTED PARTNERS		RIVER STEWARDS	
		RIVER SAFETY & MAINTENANCE SPECIALIST	INTERPRETIVE & RECREATION SPECIALIST	RESOURCE MANAGEMENT/ MAINTENANCE	INTERPRETIVE
SERVICES PROVIDED (In order of time spent)	Resource Management & Maintenance	Resource Management & Maintenance	Interpretation/Education	Resource Management & Maintenance	Interpretation/Education
	Public Safety Presence	Public Safety Presence	Recreation Programs	Public Safety Presence	Recreation Programs
	Recreation Programs	Outreach & Engagement	Outreach & Engagement	Outreach & Engagement	Outreach & Engagement
	Interpretation Education	Recreation Programs	Resource Management & Maintenance	Recreation Programs	Resource Management & Maintenance
	Outreach Engagement	Interpretation/Education	Public Safety Presence	Interpretation/Education	Public Safety Presence
	Law Enforcement				



# HOW DID OUTREACH INFORM THE PLAN?

Stakeholders were engaged through participation in the Stakeholder Committee as well as through participation in a series of Stakeholder Agency interviews. Public outreach and engagement efforts were designed to provide participants information on the River Ranger Program and to solicit input on how the Program could help meet community needs. Activities included a survey that 3,820 individuals responded to via electronic outreach and in-person at 51 community events attended by NGO partners, from 2018 to 2019.

**14** Community Partner Organizations Supported Outreach

**3820** Public Surveys Completed

**51** Public Events Attended

**6** Stakeholder Committee Meetings

**10** Stakeholder Agency Interviews

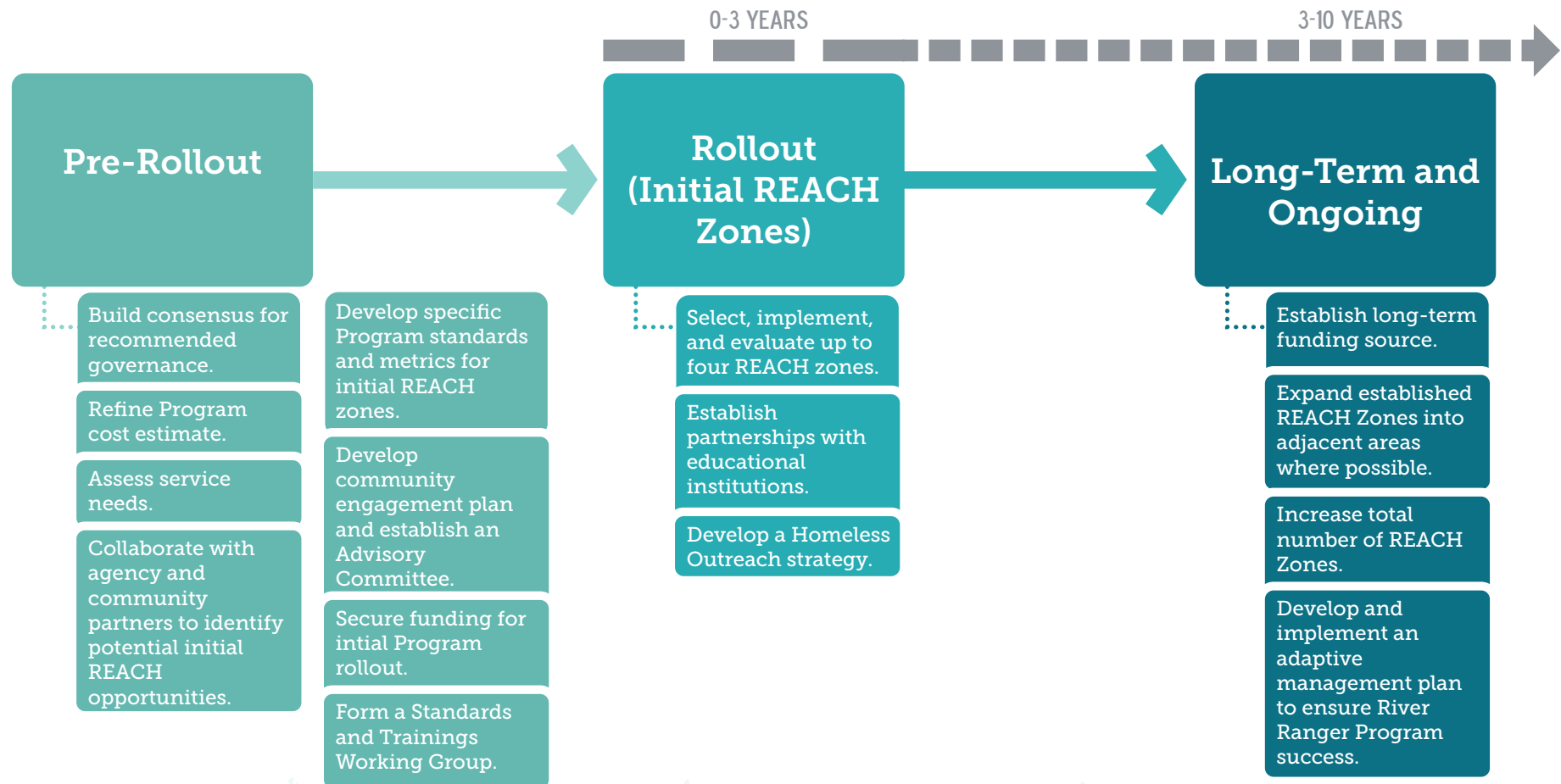
## WHAT DOES THE PUBLIC SAY?

- Resource management should be a main priority for River Rangers.
- Educational programming and well-maintained signage could help address concerns related to debris and water quality.
- 85% of respondents identified they felt unsafe when visiting the river
- Approximately 75% of respondents said that providing a “safety presence” was an extremely important role for River Rangers, while approximately 55% said that peace officer/law enforcement was an extremely important role.
- 29% of respondents indicated they were interested in future employment or volunteer opportunities.

## WHAT DO STAKEHOLDERS SAY?

- The Program should coordinate with educational agencies and community groups for watershed education programs to promote environmental science and stewardship principles.
- The Program should coordinate and collaborate with agencies providing homeless services along the River to create general response and outreach protocols.
- The Program could collaborate with local community colleges to develop curriculum and workforce opportunities.

# PROGRAM ROLLOUT





## REACH ZONES

A key recommendation of the Plan is for implementation to be initiated at strategic locations referred to as REACH Zones, which are approximately 3-4 mile stretches along the River, including its tributaries. REACH is an acronym for River Education, Adventure, Community, and Habitat (key services provided by the Program), and referring to these areas as “zones” builds upon the recognized concept of Los Angeles River Recreation Zones. REACH Zones may be comprised of existing publicly accessible parks, trails and open space, as well as areas adjacent to the River channel that have the potential to provide public access. The establishment of each REACH Zone will create River appreciation, the benefits rippling out into surrounding communities and revitalization efforts. The Plan identifies criteria for the REACH Zones as well as factors to consider when locating REACH Zones.

## NAVIGATING THE RIVER RANGER PLAN

As discussed, the River Ranger Plan defines the vision for the Program and provides guidance for realizing this vision. The Plan serves as a resource for stakeholders and community members, and is organized into six chapters:

1. **Introduction:** Provides an overview of the purpose and planning process for the River Ranger Plan.
2. **Envisioning the River Ranger Program:** Presents Mission, Vision, Guiding Principles and Goal statements that emerged from the planning process, and defines the envisioned service area for the River Ranger Program.
3. **Outreach and Engagement:** Summarizes the public and stakeholder outreach approach and findings from both Phase 1 and 2, and how the findings informed Plan development.
4. **Program Framework:** Discusses the services that will be provided by the River Ranger Program, and recommends a tiered approach to staffing based on programmatic need.
5. **Governance and Funding:** Presents potential strategies for River Ranger Program governance and funding, and provides a cost estimate for Program implementation. Two governance models are highlighted: leadership by cooperating entities, by a governmental agency. A hybrid of the two recommended models may also be feasible.
6. **Program Rollout:** Provides guidance on River Ranger Program roll-out, focusing on strategies for initial implementation, and recommends short and long-term implementation strategies.



# 1: INTRODUCTION





# INTRODUCTION

The Los Angeles River extends 51 miles, weaving through some of the most historically and culturally diverse communities in Los Angeles County. However, it has physically and figuratively become separated from these communities over time as early development within floodplains and destructive storms necessitated a new flood control system. The resulting “channelization” of the LA River facilitated more widespread urbanization and associated negative impacts.

Over time, the perception of the LA River and the watershed has shifted. Its use has grown more dynamic, creating a need for more multi-benefit, multi-purpose projects, while uniting communities along the corridor of the River and its tributaries to embrace this valuable natural asset. The City of Los Angeles’ LA River Revitalization Plan and the Lower LA River Revitalization Plan will result in new bikeways, multi-use greenways, pocket parks, and open space for the public use and enjoyment. The County-led LA River Master Plan Update and the Upper LA River and Tributaries Revitalization Plan, currently underway, will result in additional project plans for investment along the LA River and beyond. As the River gains public attention and projects move from planning and design to implementation, the need for the numerous agencies that have jurisdiction along the LA River



to work together to address education, resource improvements, and public safety along the river is becoming more urgent.

The development of the River Ranger Program Establishment Plan (River Ranger Plan), as required under Assembly Bill 1558 (C. Garcia) (AB 1558), presents an opportunity to develop a unified program that is responsive to the unique needs and conditions of the River’s diverse reaches. There are numerous challenges to implementing a coordinated Los Angeles River Ranger Program, including the River’s highly channelized nature, the geographic and hydrologic variability along its extensive length, the various stages of development for new greenways and adjacent parks, and the complexity of coordinating with numerous governing jurisdictions. At the same time, many communities along the River are galvanized by these unique characteristics and see the

opportunities that each stretch of the river can bring to their communities and the region. This enthusiasm has been bolstered by historic levels of investment in local funding measures and State bonds. These include Propositions 1, 40, 50, 68, and 84, which emphasized providing resources for clean water, parks and open space in underserved areas. By responding to the unique combination of challenges and opportunities within historically disadvantaged areas, the River Ranger Plan will catalyze the long-term multi-jurisdictional collaboration and coordination that is necessary for fostering a safe and inviting Los Angeles River. The legislation that led to the development of this Plan and the planning process are described in this chapter, followed by an overview of Plan contents and organization.



## River Ranger Program Legislation

Assembly Bill 1558 Los Angeles River: River Ranger Program requires the development of a program to provide a network of river rangers who assist the public at sites along the Los Angeles River and its tributaries. The bill was enacted in 2017 to address river-adjacent communities' limited contact with and responsibility for the River, as well as coordinate with current revitalization plans working to enhance the River to increase its ecological, social, and recreational opportunities.

### Under AB 1558, the River Ranger Program is intended to:

- Establish a Los Angeles River identity.
- Improve public safety for visitors.
- Foster collaboration among those with jurisdiction over the River.
- Protect parks, open space, and other public space.
- Engage communities in the protection and preservation of the River and its resources.
- Promote diversity and inclusion.
- Promote equal access and equity among all communities along the River with regard to the development and placement of improvements along the River.
- Monitor the physical conditions, environmental health, and development of green space along the River.
- Coordinate the work of River Rangers with programs and services.



# RIVER RANGER PLANNING PROCESS

The River Ranger Plan was developed through a stakeholder-driven process, intentionally designed to ensure that the River Ranger Program serves community-identified needs and has the support of stakeholder agencies, organizations, and community members. As illustrated in Figure 1.1, the River Ranger Plan was developed in two distinct phases. The first phase focused on soliciting public input and stakeholder consensus on a framework for the River Ranger Program. The Framework includes the mission, vision, guiding principles and goals for the Program. Phase 1 also included a

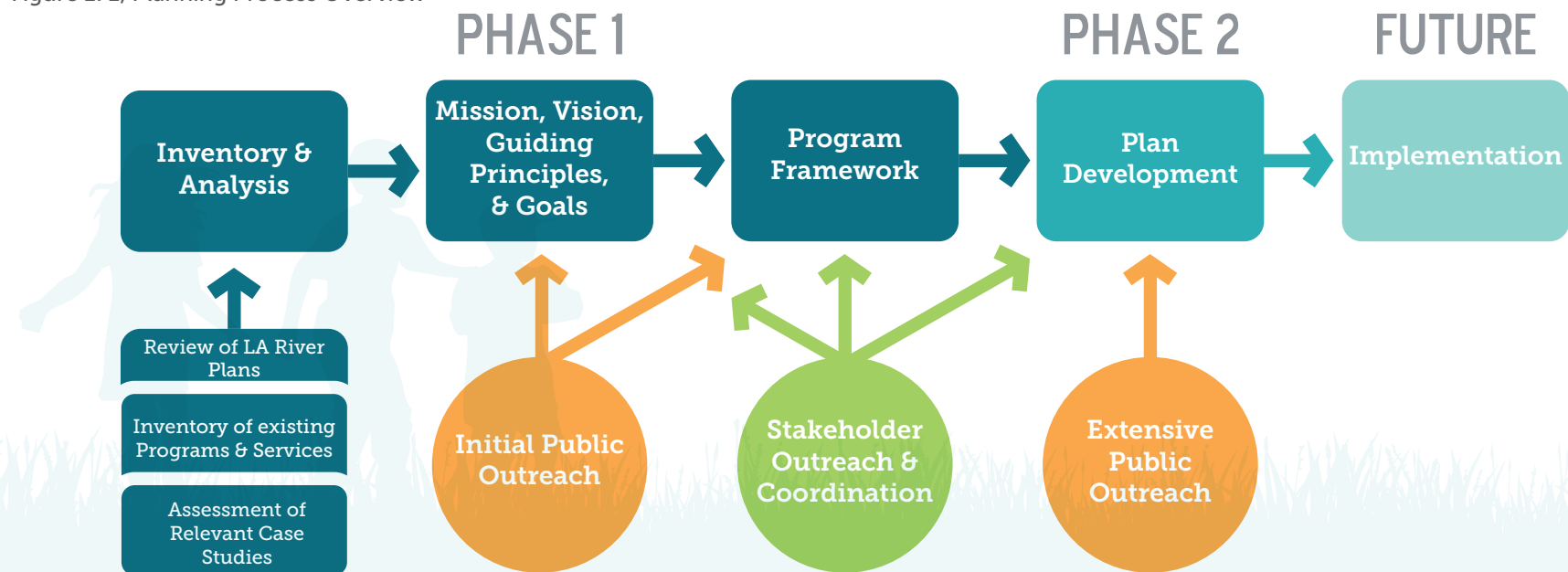
compilation of existing services, relevant plans, and similar ranger programs. This background information is called the LA River Primer and is included as Appendix A. The outcomes of Phase 1 were documented in the Phase 1 Report for submittal to legislators, and have been incorporated into this Plan.

Phase 2 further developed the program components, explored potential governance models, and considered funding strategies. Community outreach during this phase focused on underrepresented areas from Phase 1 to

ensure a community-driven program, as well as actively engaged with agency partners and stakeholders with unique roles on the LA River to ensure implementable strategies and local buy-in.

The planning process was led by two State Conservancies with Los Angeles River jurisdiction, San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) and Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC), and their respective Joint Powers Authorities (JPAs), Watershed Conservation

Figure 1. 1, Planning Process Overview



Authority (WCA) and Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority (MRCA). Additionally, two advisory groups were established to guide the development of the Plan: the Steering Committee and the Stakeholder Committee. Input was also provided by community members through outreach and engagement efforts as described in Chapter 3.

## Steering Committee

The Steering Committee included representatives from RMC, SMMC, WCA, MRCA, the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, California State Parks, California Conservation Corps, State Lands Commission, and the offices of Assembly members Speaker A. Rendon (AD 63) and C. Garcia (AD 58). The Steering Committee guided development of the Plan, providing insight and direction at each milestone of the planning process.

## Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement included meetings with a Stakeholder Committee, focused interviews with eleven stakeholder agencies, and public outreach and engagement efforts that included 51 events. Stakeholder Committee

The Steering Committee invited representatives from Federal, State, and local agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that work in communities along the River to participate in a Stakeholder Committee. The Stakeholder Committee guided the overall development of the program framework, provided input regarding feasible governance models, supported public engagement efforts, and assisted with the development of program components.

Stakeholder Committee members are identified in Chapter 3, along with additional information about the outcomes of the Stakeholder meetings. A map showing the 22 stakeholder cities and LA County is included as Figure 1.2.

## Stakeholder Agency Interviews

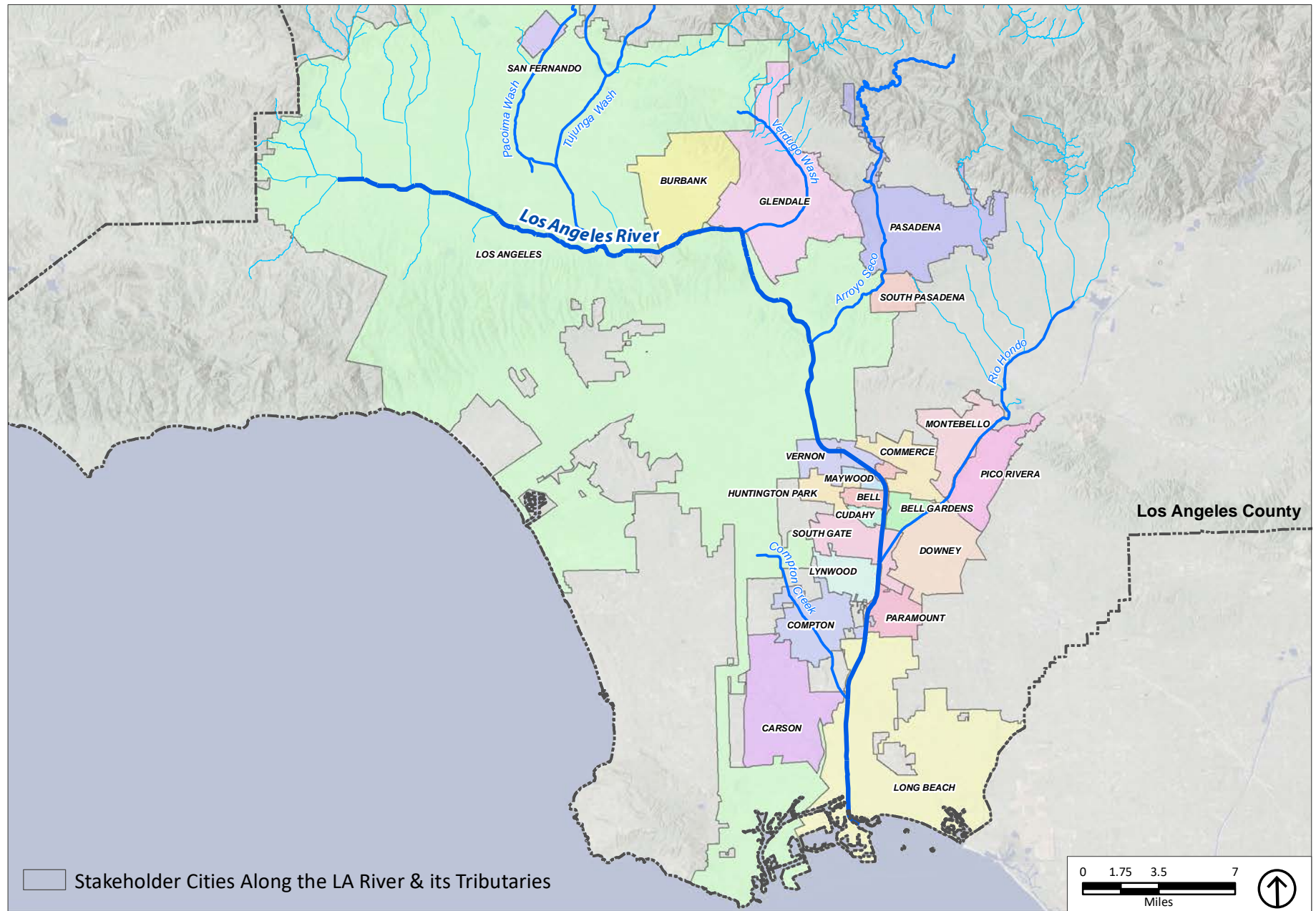
In addition to engaging Stakeholders through the Stakeholder Committee, focused stakeholder agency interviews were held during Phase 2 to further explore Program opportunities. Interviewees were chosen based on their unique jurisdictional role on the LA River or regional role related to a common service or issue impacting the implementation of a River Ranger Program. Discussion topics included agency coordination with a River Ranger Program, potential funding opportunities, and challenges regarding implementation.

Stakeholder agencies that were interviewed are identified in Chapter 3, along with descriptions of the information gathered during these interviews. A summary of each meeting is provided in Appendix C.





Figure 1. 2, Stakeholder Cities along River



## Public Outreach and Engagement

The purpose of public outreach and engagement efforts was to provide the public with information on the River Ranger Program, and to gain an understanding of how the Program could best address community priorities and legislative directives, with a particular focus on communities adjacent to the River corridor. Outreach was supported by NGOs who solicited public input at more than forty local and regional community events throughout the greater Los Angeles region, and utilized e-blasts, newsletter updates, and social media posts to provide information on the Plan development and encourage participation in a survey. Input received from the community was paramount to developing a plan that responds to community needs.

Additional information about the public outreach and engagement, including key outcomes, can be found in Chapter 3.







## **2: ENVISIONING THE RIVER RANGER PROGRAM**



# BUILDING BLOCKS FOR THE RIVER RANGER PROGRAM

This chapter presents the mission, vision, guiding principles, and goal statements for the River Ranger Plan, and describes the envisioned geographic service area for the Program. Mission, vision, guiding principles and goal statements were developed through a collaborative process with stakeholders, and were informed by the public outreach conducted in Phase 1. The statements were refined and re-affirmed by the cumulative results of Phase 1 and Phase 2 outreach, as well as outcomes of interviews with Stakeholder agencies conducted during Phase 2. Together, these statements are intended to guide the development and implementation of the River Ranger Program along the entire River and its tributaries, consistent with the intent of AB 1558.

## SERVICE AREA

The River Ranger Program is envisioned as providing different types of services along the entire 51-mile river channel, from its beginnings in Canoga Park in the San Fernando Valley to its culmination in Long Beach and its tributaries. At a minimum, the service area will be comprised of the river channel, fence to fence, and immediately adjacent parks and open space. The Service Area may expand as the Program grows.

## MISSION

The mission of the River Ranger Program is to foster connections between communities, agencies, and resources to promote safe, equitable usage and stewardship of the LA River and its tributaries as an activated and connected greenway that supports ecological, social, and recreational opportunities.

## VISION

*How the River Ranger Program and a revitalized river will impact communities in the future...*

As the river is being revitalized and embraced as a community resource, the River Ranger Program will ensure safe, enjoyable and equitable experiences along the LA River and its tributaries by promoting equitable access, recreational and educational opportunities, community engagement, and resource protection along this vital resource. The River Ranger Program will provide opportunities to experience the River as a safe and inviting place, and to participate in its enhancement through volunteer or employment programs.





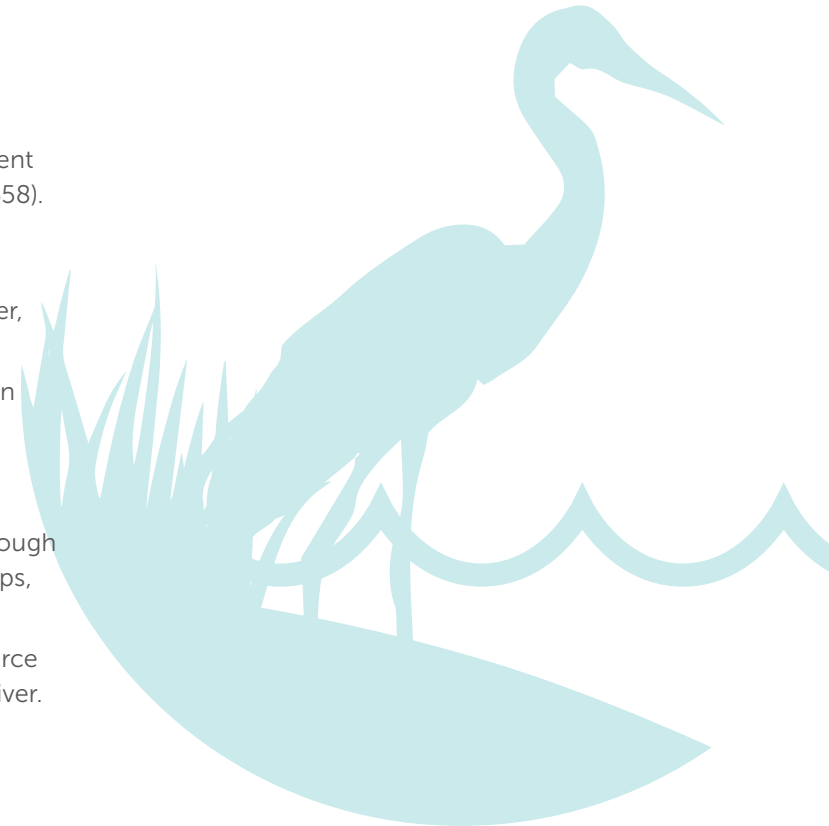
## GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1

### Resource Management & Maintenance

Natural, cultural, and built resources along the Los Angeles River provide multiple environmental and community benefits; these resources will be protected, maintained, enhanced, and interpreted for the public to ensure that the River is a safe and enjoyable place to visit.

#### Goals

-  Monitor the physical conditions, environmental health, and development of green space along the River (AB 1558).
-  Maintain cleanliness and safety of resources and facilities (such as trails, parks, restrooms), through debris, litter, and graffiti removal.
-  Engage communities in the protection and preservation of the River and its resources (AB 1558).
-  Support existing and developing protection and restoration efforts through staff and volunteer efforts, partnerships, and programming.
-  Create a consistent standard of resource and facility management along the River.



## GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2

### Recreation and Interpretation/ Education

The Los Angeles River will continue to serve as an outdoor classroom that provides resources and experiences that build understanding and inspire appreciation of the river's ecology, history, and community benefits, as well as an experiential landscape that offers active and passive recreational opportunities that respond to the varying physical conditions along the River.

#### Goals

-  Improve public awareness of River access and recreational opportunities.
-  Provide and promote safe, sustainable river-engagement opportunities.
-  Collaborate with local agencies, businesses and non-profit organizations to increase recreation opportunities and facilitate education on safe river corridor access.
-  Improve public knowledge of river history and ecology.
-  Engage the public in developing a greater understanding of the River through community science and similar efforts.
-  Provide workforce development and employment opportunities.
-  Assist and lead volunteer and youth education programs.








## GUIDING PRINCIPLE 3

### Outreach and Engagement

All visitors will be encouraged to utilize the River, and provided information and resources to ensure safe and resource-sensitive use.

#### Goals

-  Educate the public regarding where and how to safely experience the River corridor.
-  Engage with existing entities who conduct homeless engagement and provide support services and resources.
-  Engage visitors in defining the River's identity as a community resource.
-  Observe use of the river and adjacent trails, parks, and open space to proactively identify and respond to emerging issues and opportunities.
-  Promote diversity and inclusion (AB 1558).









## GUIDING PRINCIPLE 4

### Public Safety

Designated access points, trails, parks and open spaces along the Los Angeles River will be inviting and safe for visitors to enjoy.

#### Goals

-  Improve public safety for visitors (AB 1558).
-  Protect parks, open space, and other public space (AB 1558).
-  Develop standards for providing rules and regulations as well as preventative warnings and education to existing and potential River visitors.
-  Ensure residents and visitors have information needed to contact appropriate public safety responders for maintenance, law enforcement, swift water rescue, and emergency services.
-  Monitor safety measures along pathways and access points, such as adequate lighting, wayfinding signage, and emergency phone stations.
-  Collaborate with local jurisdictions to address safety concerns related to encampments along the River corridor.










## GUIDING PRINCIPLE 5

### Administration and Coordination

Coordination and collaboration among agencies with jurisdiction over the River, organizations that provide services and programs, and members of the public is essential to providing dependable services that enhance the river as a natural and community resource. The River Ranger Program will act as a central conduit to bring together all parties involved.

#### Goals

-  Coordinate the work of the River Rangers Program with existing programs and services (AB 1558), and adequately route issues/concerns to one centralized contact who can properly assign to responsible entity.
-  Foster collaboration among those with jurisdiction over the River (AB 1558).
-  Promote equal access and equity among all communities along the River with regard to the development and placement of improvements along the river (AB 1558).
-  Develop adequate funding strategies, partnerships, and sponsorship opportunities to ensure program sustainability.
-  Promote diversity and inclusion (AB 1558).
-  Offer employment opportunities with local hire as a focus, as well as creation of volunteer opportunities.
-  Solicit and address visitor input on concerns, issues, and opportunities.





# **3: PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT**



# OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

The River Ranger Program planning process was carried out as a stakeholder-driven process designed to meet community needs in creating a safe, accessible, and inviting river experience. Stakeholder outreach and engagement included three components: a Stakeholder Committee, a series of stakeholder agency interviews, and public outreach and engagement.



## Stakeholder Committee Participants

Stakeholder Committee included representatives from the following:\*

### Cities

- Bell
- Bell Gardens
- Burbank
- Carson
- Commerce
- Compton
- Cudahy
- Downey
- Glendale
- Huntington Park
- Long Beach
- Los Angeles
- Lynwood
- Maywood
- Montebello
- Paramount
- Pasadena
- Pico Rivera
- San Fernando
- South Gate
- South Pasadena
- Vernon

### Governmental

- California Conservation Corps
- California State Parks
- LA County Department of Parks and Recreation
- LA Department of Public Works
- Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority
- Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority
- San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy
- Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
- State Lands Commission
- US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- Watershed Conservation Authority

### Non-Governmental Organizations

- Amigos de los Rios
- Arroyo Seco Foundation
- Conservation Corps of Long Beach
- Friends of the LA River
- From Lot to Spot
- LA Conservation Corps
- LA County Bike Coalition
- Mujeres de la Tierra
- North East Trees
- Pacoima Beautiful
- River LA
- The River Project
- Trails4All
- TreePeople

\*listed in alphabetical order



# STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee invited cities, governmental organizations, NGOs to participate in the Stakeholder Committee. The Stakeholder Committee members participated in six meetings to review and provide feedback on River Ranger Program development. The insights shared by Committee members provided perspectives and local experiences that shaped development of all parts of the River Ranger Program, from the vision statement to the governance models. The summary of meetings presented below highlights the contributions from Committee members.

Meetings during Phase 2 further explored opportunities and challenges regarding River Ranger Program components, governance structure, and the initial roll-out of the Program. The final meeting conducted during Phase 2 presented key components of the Draft River Ranger Plan, and solicited input on the Plan and Program roll-out, including potential locations and community considerations.



## Stakeholder Meeting Outcomes

- **Meeting #1, March 2018, Los Angeles and Meeting #2, April 2018, Long Beach:** The first two meetings provided background and common understanding of the Program legislation and allowed stakeholders to explore key issues. Stakeholders shared information about river-related activities in which their department or agency is currently engaged. This information was compiled into a Services and Program Inventory (Appendix A, Attachment 1) that helped inform which services the Program could provide or complement. Participants discussed services that they would like the Program to provide, and many emphasized the importance of providing safe and inviting access.
- **Meeting #3, May 2018, Burbank:** At this meeting, participants worked in small groups to collaborate on the draft program mission statement, vision statement, and goals and guiding principles. This work was synthesized and refined by the project team and is presented as the Program mission, vision, goals and guiding principles in Chapter 2.
- **Meeting #4, June 2018, Los Angeles:** The final meeting conducted during Phase 1 presented the Draft Phase 1 Report, solicited input on the contents of the Plan, and identified issues, opportunities, and implementation strategies to be further explored. Input received during this meeting was incorporated into the final Phase 1 Report.
- **Meeting #5, December 2018, Paramount:** Participants provided input on potential program components and governance structures. Insights from this meeting helped narrow the options for governance models. Participants also shared critical information on upcoming community events which contributed to the success of the Phase 2 public outreach and engagement efforts.
- **Meeting #6, February 2019, Los Angeles:** The final Stakeholder Committee meeting presented key elements of the River Ranger Program report. Participants identified potential locations along the Los Angeles River for initial program roll-out, using location considerations and program criteria from the Plan to guide site selection.

# STAKEHOLDER AGENCY INTERVIEWS

Ten stakeholder agencies were selected for focused interviews. These agencies were selected based on their unique jurisdictional role on the Los Angeles River or regional role related to a common service or issue impacting the implementation of a River Ranger Program. Discussion topics included agency coordination with a River Ranger Program and potential opportunities for funding and challenges regarding implementation.

The following stakeholder agencies were interviewed:

- LA County Flood Control District (LACFCD)
- LA County Department of Parks and Recreation
- US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- Conservation Corps (CCC, LACC, CCLB, SGVCC)
- Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)
- Center for a Competitive Workforce
- City of Long Beach
- City of Los Angeles
- Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Agency (LA Metro)
- City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP)

Although the agencies interviewed represent a variety of perspectives and responsibilities, several common themes emerged from these interviews. In general, stakeholder agencies are interested in developing partnerships and operating agreements between parties to provide services along the River. In particular, many interviewees expressed interest in collaboration and coordination to address homelessness along the River. There was support for incorporating existing State and local Conservation Corps in the River Ranger Program. Ideas were also shared for how workforce development could be an entry point for youth into fields associated with this program, including landscape architecture, engineering, and hydrology.

The interviews also explored potential funding opportunities. These interviews represent the beginning of a conversation, and it is recommended that additional meetings with agencies that expressed an interest in contributing to the Program be held in the future. The expertise of these agencies, and their familiarity with communities and the River will be invaluable during Program implementation. [Input from the interviews can be found in Chapters 4 and 5.]





## PUBLIC OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Recognizing that conditions along the River and in the adjacent communities vary greatly along the River's length, outreach and engagement efforts focused on gathering input from all communities. Consistent with the objectives of AB 1558, public outreach initiated the process of building a larger constituency of residents who are informed about and engaged with protection and preservation of the Los Angeles River. Engaging communities at the beginning of the planning process provided information and insights that are incorporated throughout the River Ranger Plan.

Outreach and engagement activities were designed to provide participants information on the River Ranger Program and to gain an understanding of how the Program could help meet community needs. Activities included a survey and interactive posters presented by NGO partners at 51 community events, including farmers' markets, street fairs, and art events. Outreach activities leveraged existing community events and provided an opportunity to engage in dialogue with participants about the Program and the River itself. The survey was available in English, Spanish, and Chinese, and also available online for community members who did not attend events.

Outreach and engagement activities were conducted in two phases, but utilized the same survey. Phase 1 activities occurred between March and June 2018, while Phase 2 activities occurred between September 2018 and February 2019. Phase 2 outreach activities built on Phase 1 efforts by incorporating additional strategies to ensure broader participation and targeting areas that were underrepresented in Phase 1. In addition to the survey and events, Phase 2 engagement included presentations at public meetings and stakeholder interviews.

Stakeholder Committee participants helped identify strategic community events such as municipal holiday events, County Park Snow Days, and other seasonal activities to expand the reach of outreach efforts. All stakeholders were also asked to share the survey link with their distribution lists and post it on their websites.

Outreach was supported by the fourteen NGOs listed to the right. Together, these organizations solicited public input at community events, and utilized e-blasts, newsletter updates, and social media posts to provide information on the

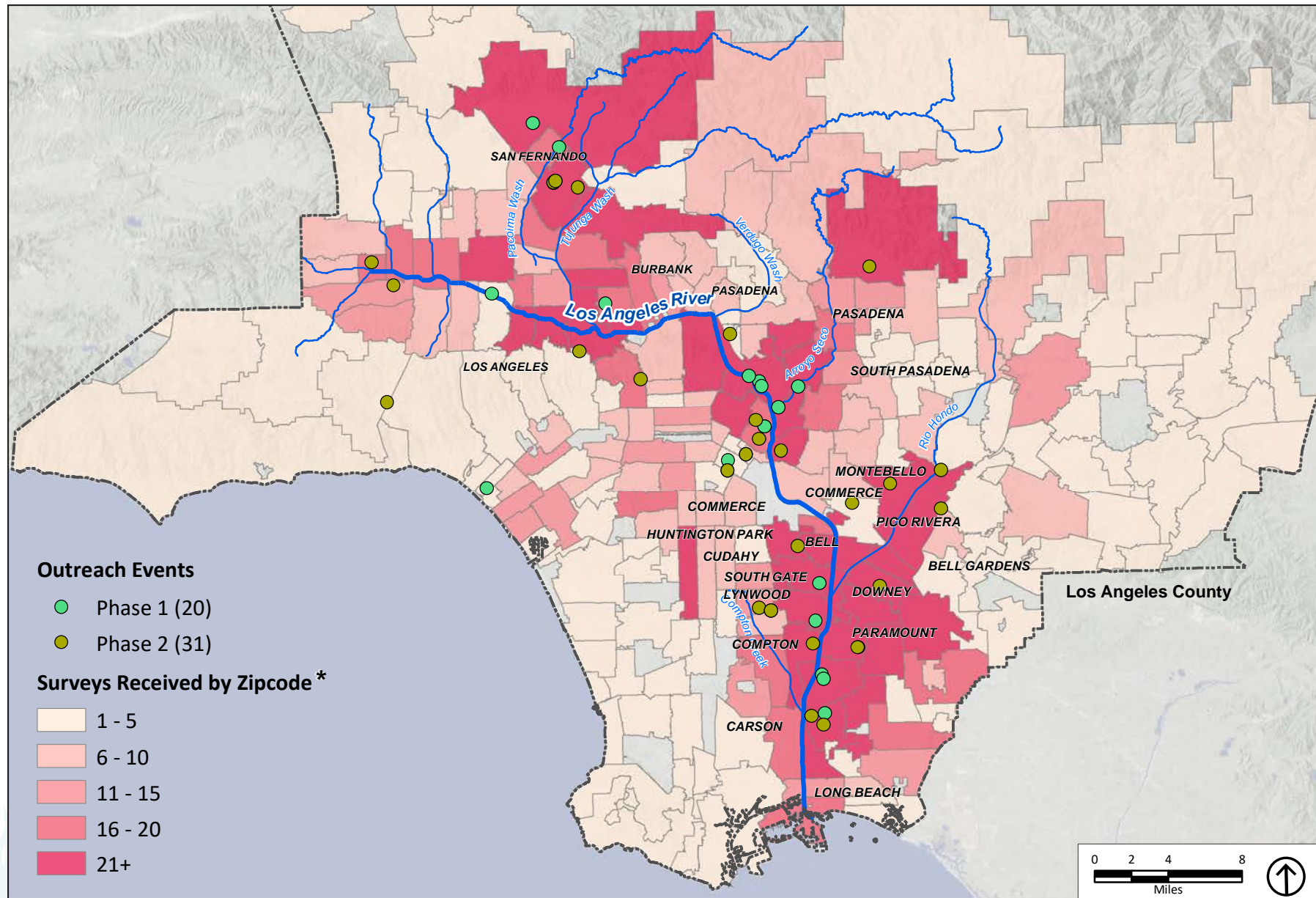
River Ranger Plan development and encourage participation in the survey. Hard copy surveys were offered at events; completed hard copy surveys were entered online and analyzed with online submissions.

### NGO Outreach Partners

- Amigos de los Rios
- Arroyo Seco Foundation
- Conservation Corps of Long Beach (CCLB)
- Friends of the LA River (FOLAR)
- From Lot to Spot
- LA Conservation Corps (LACC)
- LA County Bike Coalition
- Mujeres de la Tierra (MDLT)
- North East Trees
- Pacoima Beautiful
- River LA
- The River Project
- Trails4All
- TreePeople

## CHAPTER 3: OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Figure 3.1, Phase 1 and 2 Community Outreach Events and Survey Participation



\*Where zipcode was provided by survey respondents.



## Who Participated?

In total, 3,820 surveys were completed over the course of Phase 1 and Phase 2 from communities all along the River and its tributaries. Figure 3.1 identifies Phase 1 and Phase 2 events where community input was solicited through tabling with interactive posters and surveys. It also summarizes the geographic distribution of the 2,989 survey respondents who provided location data. Indicating the regional interest in the Los Angeles River, surveys were collected from zipcodes far from the River, as well as from neighboring counties. Survey responses were received from a total of 334 different zipcodes, and respondents ranged in age from under 18 to over 65, as shown in Figure 3.2. Approximately ninety-two percent of survey participants completed the English survey, and approximately eight percent completed the Spanish version.

Additional input was received through the interactive poster activities that paralleled the survey questions. The following discussion of outcomes focuses on data from the survey. Outcomes of the interactive poster activities generally mirror survey results and are discussed in more detail in Appendix B.

## What Did Participants Say?

The survey and interactive posters asked participants to rate the importance of specific roles of a River Ranger, to provide input on safety concerns when visiting the River, and to select topics they would like more information on. Participants were asked for background information, information about frequency of visits to the River, and invited to provide written comments and to provide an e-mail address if they were interested in future volunteer or job opportunities in coordination with the program. Figures 3.2, Survey Engagement Participant Age, and 3.3, Survey Engagement Visitation Frequency, describe age distribution of participants and how often participants visit the River. Outcomes of the survey are summarized below, and Appendix A provides more detailed results from the survey and poster activity.

Results from Phase 1 engagement activities strongly resemble cumulative results. However, there are several findings from the cumulative Phase 1 and 2 results that differ slightly from Phase 1 results. Based on cumulative responses, improving access/connectivity/signage to the River, care for natural resources, and safety presence surfaced as the most desired roles for a River Ranger.

Figure 3.2, Survey Engagement Participant Age

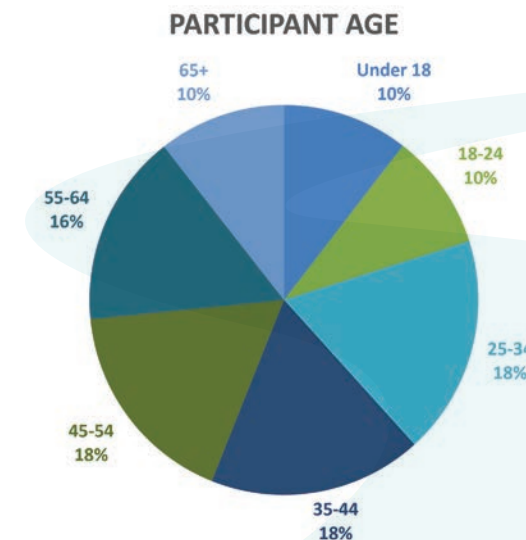
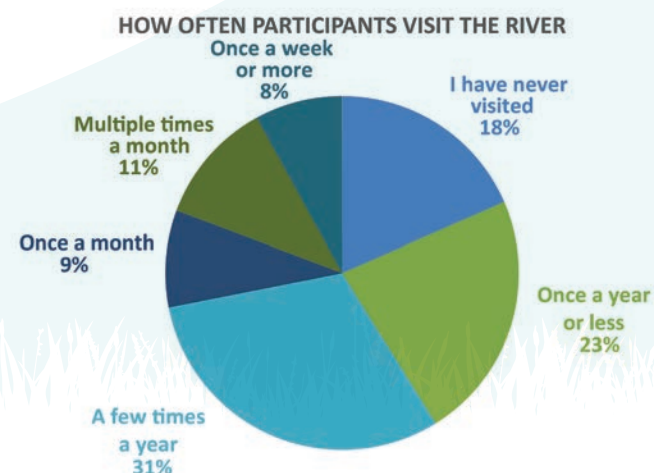


Figure 3.3, Survey Engagement Visitation Frequency



## CHAPTER 3: OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Due to the variety of conditions present along the River, survey responses were analyzed based on participants' zipcodes (geography), to determine how location affected responses. Geographic analyses included comparing responses of those who reside within zipcodes that are within ½ mile of the River with those that reside farther from the River, as well as comparing survey responses of participants living in proximity (zipcodes within ½ mile) of the Lower and Upper River. Although responses varied slightly within the aforementioned categories, they do not indicate any substantial differences between respondents based on proximity to the River or location in the Upper or Lower portions of the River that would impact plan development.

Responses were also analyzed by how often participants reported visiting the River to determine if responses from frequent visitors differed from responses by infrequent visitors. No substantial differences existed between participants that visited the River once a month or more and those that visited the River less frequently.

Overall, there was a general consensus about concerns and priorities along the whole River, regardless of geography. Responses from

community members throughout LA County highlighted their desire for the Program and its mission to activate the River.

Highlights from the analysis of survey results received over the entire outreach and engagement period are summarized below and

further described in Chapter 4 as they relate to specific topic areas. Questions with open ended response opportunities were viewed together with the summarized data to develop the final Plan.



## Role of a River Ranger

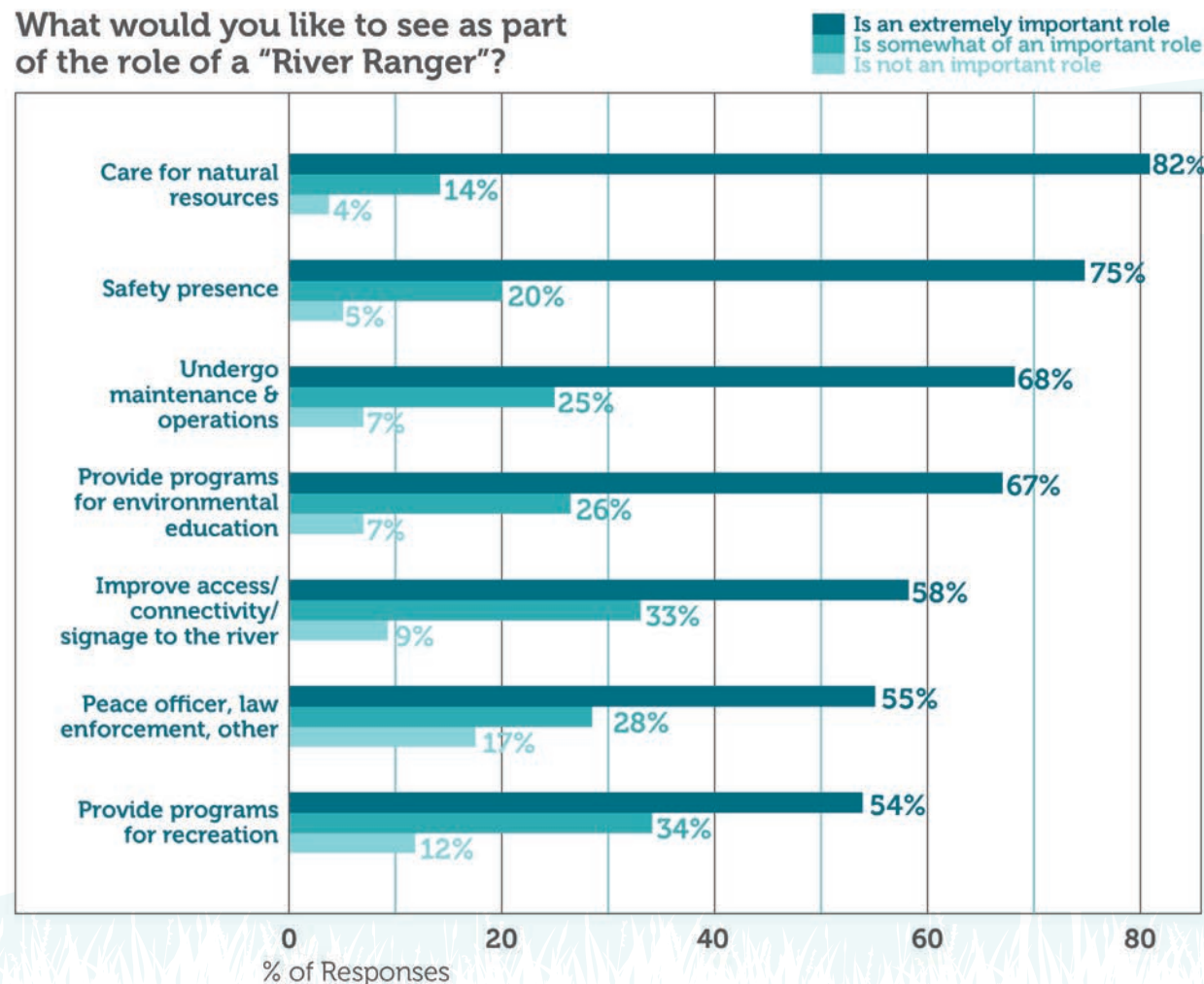
Participants were asked to indicate the importance of seven potential Ranger roles. Each of the seven roles was determined to be “extremely important” by 50 percent or more of participants, as shown in Figure 3.4.

- Greatest importance was assigned to caring for natural resources, with 82 percent of participants indicating this role is “extremely important.”
- Providing a safety presence was determined to be “extremely important” by 75 percent of respondents.
- Other top priorities included undergoing maintenance and operations, and providing programs for environmental education.<sup>1</sup>
- Safety presence was favored over law enforcement as a ranger role, with approximately 75 percent and 55 percent identifying these as extremely important roles, respectively.

These results informed the development of the services that will be provided by the River Ranger Program, as described in Chapter 4.

Figure 3.4, Ranger Role Priorities

### What would you like to see as part of the role of a “River Ranger”?



<sup>1</sup> Environmental Education was also a top priority of participants in the Lower LA River Revitalization Plan.

### Safety Concerns

When asked about safety concerns experienced when visiting the River, approximately 15 percent of participants said they feel safe when visiting the River. Respondent-identified safety concerns associated with the River were generally consistent regardless of geography, and are identified in Figure 3.5.

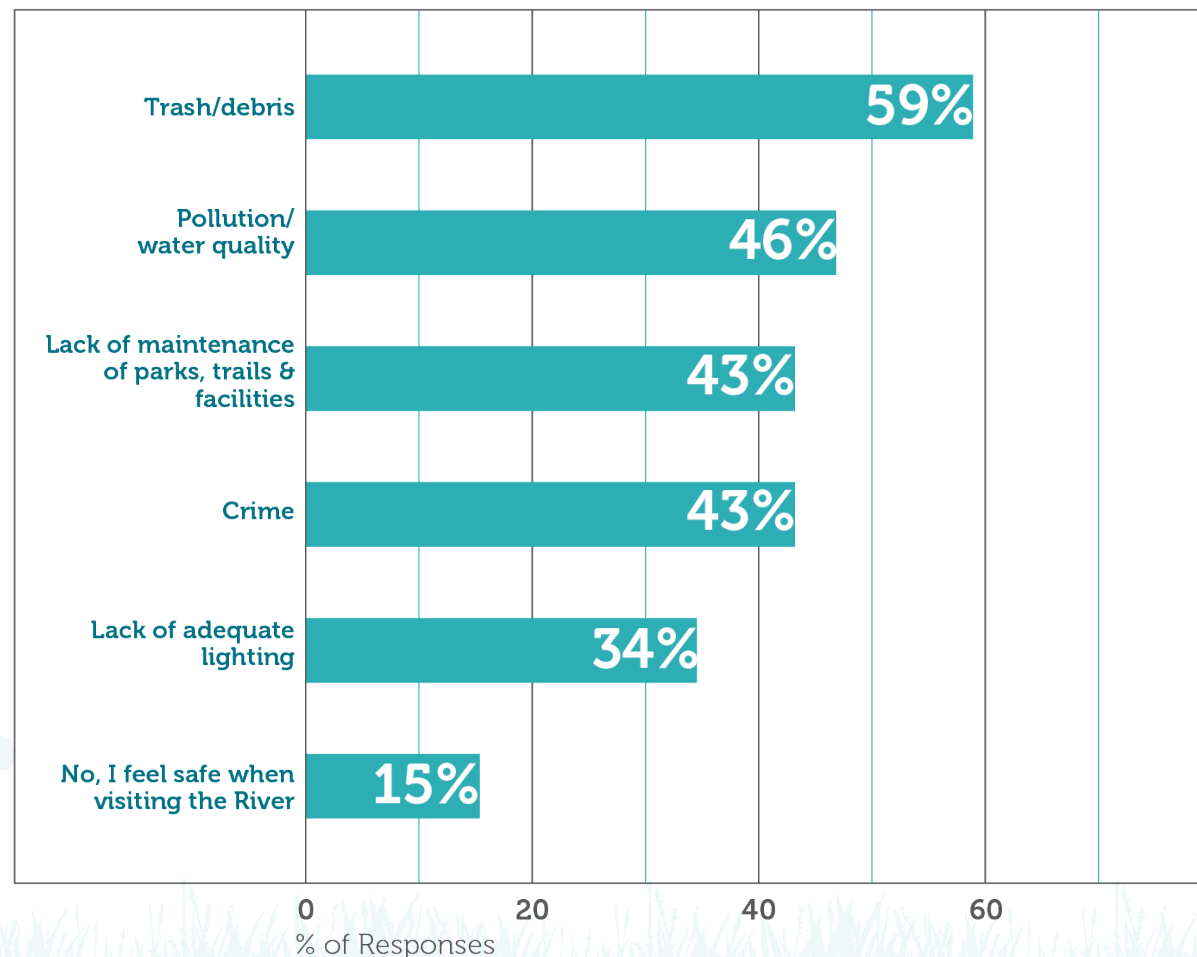
- Trash and debris were identified by approximately 59 percent of all respondents as a safety concern, emerging as the leading concern.
- Of respondents that had never visited the River, 48 percent identified trash and debris as a safety concern, representing the largest perceived safety concern for this population.
- Other top safety concerns were pollution/ water quality, lack of maintenance, and crime. Participants who have never visited the River listed these as perceived concerns.

Additional safety concerns were also identified in open-ended responses:

- Out of 679 open-ended responses, 310 referenced homeless populations along the River with comments regarding actual or perceived safety concerns. Participants indicated concern about debris, dangerous objects and the need for Rangers to take a role in homeless outreach along the River.
- Fifty responses indicated drug use as a safety concern when visiting the River.

Figure 3.5, Safety Concerns

### Do you have any safety concerns when visiting the River?





A substantial body of research shows that the lack of proper maintenance, lighting and the prevalence of trash and graffiti can create the perception of crime, thereby creating a barrier to use. This information, coupled with the survey responses, helped shape recommendations for Program services to improve public safety for River visitors, as detailed in Chapter 4.

## Education

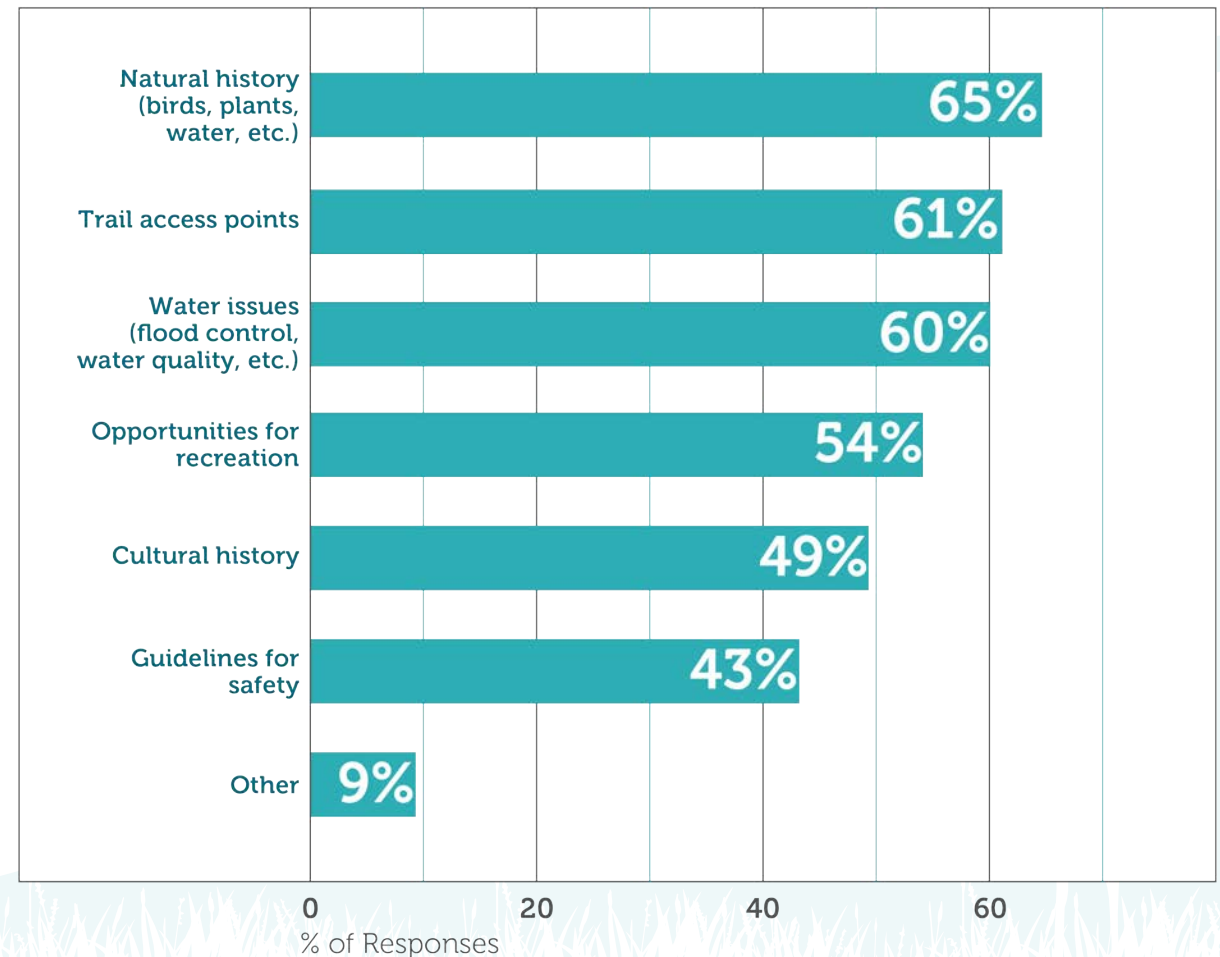
Participants reported a variety of Los Angeles River topics they would like to learn more about, as shown in Figure 3.6.

- The greatest interest was in natural history, with 65 percent of respondents indicating they would like to learn more about this topic.
- Additional topics with high interest were trail access points and water issues.

The high interest in natural history and other education topics informed the development of education and interpretive services described in Chapter 4.

Figure 3.6, River Education

### What Los Angeles River topics would you like to know more about?



### River Activities

Survey participants reported on the activities they currently participate in at the River, and how frequently they visit the River, as shown in Figure 3.3 and Figure 3.7.

- The most frequently reported activity was walking.
- Biking and enjoying the view are also popular activities.
- Approximately 50 percent of respondents were interested in future employment and/or volunteer activities along the River.
- Approximately 28 percent of respondents visit the River once a month or more frequently.

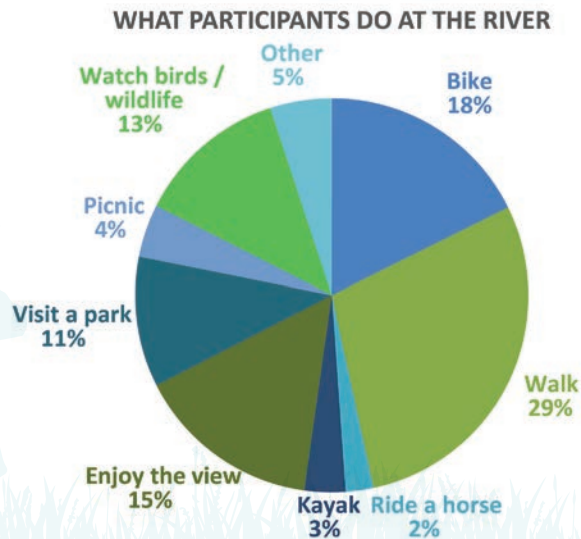
Half of respondents reported active use of the River, in the form of walking, biking, kayaking, and equestrian use. Passive activities such as enjoying the view or observing wildlife are also popular activities.

Figure 3.3, shows that 41 percent of respondents reported they used the River once per year or less, indicating there is a unique opportunity to increase use and the need for proper mechanisms to do so. The majority of those who indicated they had never visited the River were 18 years old and under, which helped inform recommended strategies for engagement with schools and local organizations focused on

youth. Like the safety concerns discussed above, these findings helped inform recommendations for Program components for recreation, education and engagement, and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

The high level of interest in employment and/or volunteer activities along the River informed development of the River Steward role described in Chapter 4. Contact information provided by interested survey participants may be used for follow-up efforts during Plan implementation.

Figure 3.7, Activity Use



# KEY OUTCOMES FROM STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

Several key themes emerged from the cumulative results of community and stakeholder outreach and engagement efforts:

- The protection of natural resources and proper maintenance were top concerns and both lend themselves to unique job training and career development opportunities.
- Public safety was a clear priority for the use and enjoyment of the LA River, which may be achieved through space activation and/or the development of a program that facilitates safe use and stewardship of the River.
- Increased educational programming and a greater understanding of water issues and pollution were important needs identified by participants. These can provide opportunities for deep community engagement and enhancements to science education in local schools and civic organizations.

These findings are consistent with the directives of AB 1558, as well as findings from other planning efforts addressing River-adjacent communities. Accordingly, they shaped the core program components and implementation strategies presented in this Plan.







# 4: PROGRAM FRAMEWORK



# WHO ARE RIVER RANGERS AND WHAT SERVICES DO THEY PROVIDE?

The River Ranger Program will need to be flexible and responsive to the needs of local communities if it is to accomplish its mission of partnering with communities and agencies to promote access, safety, and other community benefits. This chapter presents an adaptable and responsive approach to fulfill Program goals and to respond to community needs, defining both the services to be provided and the workforce that will provide these services. This approach emerged in response to community and stakeholder input; review of ranger programs at local, state, and federal park systems across the country; and individual interviews conducted with park ranger program professionals and practitioners. Case studies of other ranger programs used as references can be found in Appendix A, Attachment 3.

## What services will the Program provide?

Services provided by the Program are organized into five program areas:



Resource Management and Maintenance



Recreation and Education/Interpretation



Community Outreach and Engagement



Public Safety



Administration and Coordination

Each program area will contribute to public safety and the provision of a public safety presence along the River. As such, safety is a component of each program area and the discussion of public safety focuses on safety roles not addressed through the other program areas. Interfacing with the public daily and coordinating with existing river activities requires enthusiastic and motivated staff who can efficaciously foster collaboration across overlapping jurisdictions and become a trusted presence in the community.

Education and outreach in each community and local River conditions will inform on-the-ground approaches for each program area.

Services provided under each program area, as well as the public and stakeholder input that informed these services, are presented on the following pages. Program employees and contractors are referred to as “staff” in the overview of program areas, and further defined in the discussion of staffing that concludes this chapter.







Multi-faceted Rangers can provide numerous services to communities.





### Guiding Principle

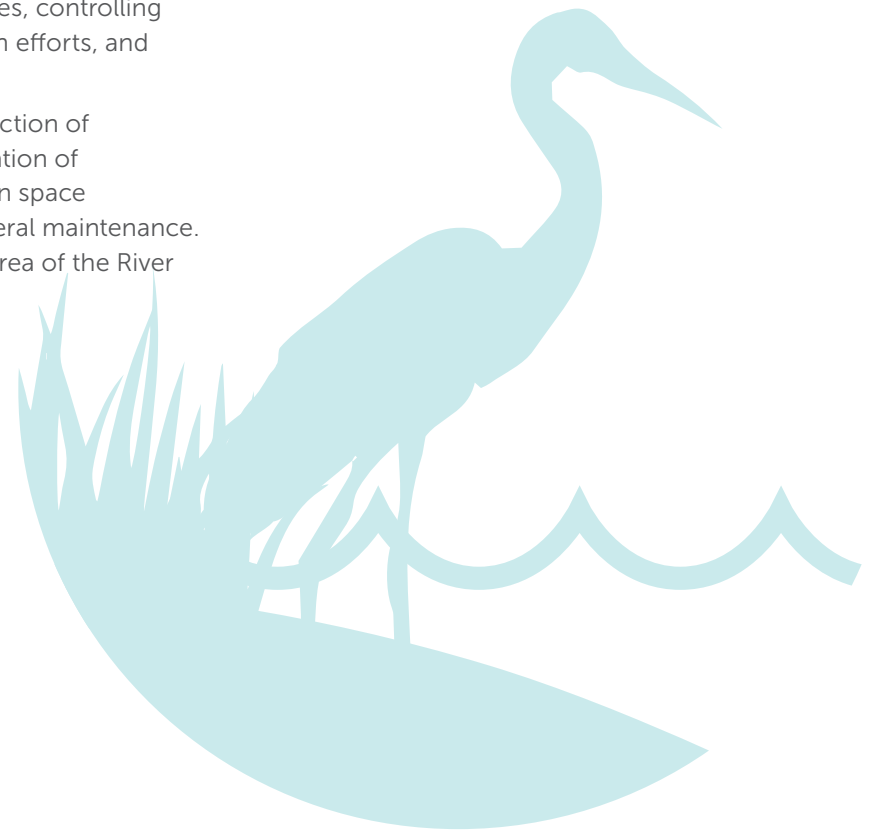
Natural, cultural and built resources along the Los Angeles River provide multiple environmental and community benefits; these resources will be protected, maintained, enhanced, and interpreted for the public to ensure that the River is a safe and enjoyable place to visit.

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

Multi-faceted park rangers can be champions for the protection of natural resources, ecosystems and wildlife, achieved through the stewardship of shared resources now and for generations to come.

The River Ranger Program encompasses a wide range of activities, including maintaining safe access to public trails and facilities, controlling invasive species and revegetation efforts, and removing litter and graffiti.

General duties will include protection of resources, enhancement/restoration of resources, monitoring River/open space conditions, and performing general maintenance. Services will vary based on the area of the River in which they occur.







## WHAT DO STAKEHOLDERS SAY?

- River Rangers could be responsible for maintenance along existing and future public trails, such as the LA River Bike Path, an LA Metro project.
- Restoration and landscaping activities should be coordinated with State and local conservation corps and river-restoration organizations.
- Public safety infrastructure including lighting, beacons, signage, and fencing should be well maintained.

## WHAT DOES THE PUBLIC SAY?

- Water issues and trash/debris are major safety concerns.
- Resource management should be a main priority for River Rangers.
- River Rangers should be stewards of the River's natural and community resources, protecting ecological elements and enhancing the usability of the river for all individuals.

## Who is currently providing Resource Management and Maintenance?

- US Army Corps of Engineers
- LA County Flood Control District
- State Lands Commission
- Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority
- Watershed Conservation Authority
- LA County Department of Parks and Recreation
- City of LA Department of Public Works and Recreation and Parks
- Non-governmental organizations
- Other cities along the LA River

## What activities are currently taking place?

- Trash, litter, and graffiti removal
- Landscaping and tree trimming
- Trail building and maintenance
- Facilities repair
- In-channel improvements: removal of invasive vegetation, vegetation replanting and routine sediment removal

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE SERVICES



### Protection

Protection of natural resources and wildlife will rely on the vigilant observation of River Ranger Program staff. Staff will help protect the aesthetic and functional integrity of the channel and safety access features by reducing illicit activities such as off-trail uses and vandalism, as well as through fire prevention management activities related to both vegetation and debris. Signage will be critical to supporting these efforts by providing rules and regulations as well as educational and safety information addressing topics that include but are not limited to the location, water quality, safety precautions related to the ecological habitats present.



### Enhancement/ Restoration

The Program will support vegetation and habitat management, protection, and restoration efforts through staff and volunteer efforts, partnerships, and programming. Efforts may include assisting the US Army Corps of Engineers, who is already engaged in habitat enhancement and floodplain restoration activities in the upper reaches of the River, and duplicating certain efforts in the lower River. In-channel efforts may include native species planting and floodplain enhancements that honor the natural contours of the River.

Invasive plant removal and replanting activities in and adjacent to the channel will be conducted in collaboration with local jurisdictions, nonprofits, and job training programs. Vegetation enhancement and tree plantings may occur in parks and trails along the River to reconnect riparian and upland habitat and enhance ecological functions such as carbon sequestration and nutrient cycling. In certain areas, staff may develop organic waste reduction programs, composting all green waste on site.



### Monitor River/Open Space Conditions

Staff will be responsible for monitoring, documenting, and reporting general conditions along and within the River channel based on observed appearance. Monitoring, as required by AB 1558, will include physical conditions, environmental health, and development of greenspace along the River. This includes the condition and usage of trails, adjacent parks, access points, signage, and natural habitat.

Regular reporting, dependent on secured funding, may be implemented for tracking debris and trash levels, habitat/wildlife conditions or sightings (for educational programs), and water quality where authorized by the appropriate regulating authorities. This type of monitoring and reporting provides an opportunity for partnership with community organizations and schools.





## Maintenance

Regular maintenance is not only beneficial to ecological and community health, but is well recognized by survey participants as an important contributor to public safety. Rangers may be responsible for maintenance of spaces adjacent to the River, and providing in-channel assistance to the Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LACFCD), the primary entity responsible for channel maintenance, and the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). A consistent maintenance schedule will be established for each geographic service area along the River.

- **Maintenance projects adjacent to the channel:** Staff will coordinate with partner agencies to prioritize, plan, and implement maintenance projects. Maintenance projects may include repairing access features, lighting, bike repair stations, and signage, as well as maintaining trails and associated public infrastructure such as restrooms and landscaping.
- **Trash and debris removal adjacent to the channel:** As part of their regular duties, staff will remove trash, debris, and graffiti from channel-adjacent open spaces, where it can deter the safe use and enjoyment of these spaces by blocking access to bike paths, parks and greenways, and create an appearance that the area is neglected and thereby unsafe. Staff will collaborate with and provide support to local agencies engaged in clean up days along the River, such as the annual springtime Great LA River CleanUp hosted by Friends of the LA River.
- **Within the channel:** Assistance provided to LACFCD within the channel may include removal of overgrown or invasive vegetation, trash, and debris, particularly following major flood and rain events. These events often result in detritus buildup from urban runoff, threatening wildlife and natural habitats.

## Recommended: Communication Platform

It is recommended that the Program provide a platform for staff to report any issues or potential hazards observed (website, social media platform, or app). The platform should allow staff to inform the community about issues and report timelines for resolution, and allow visitors to submit comments and photos of potential maintenance issues.



## Guiding Principle

The Los Angeles River will continue to serve as an outdoor classroom that provides resources and experiences that build understanding and inspire appreciation of the River's ecology, history, and community benefits; as well as an experiential landscape that offers active and passive recreation opportunities that respond to the varying physical conditions along the River.

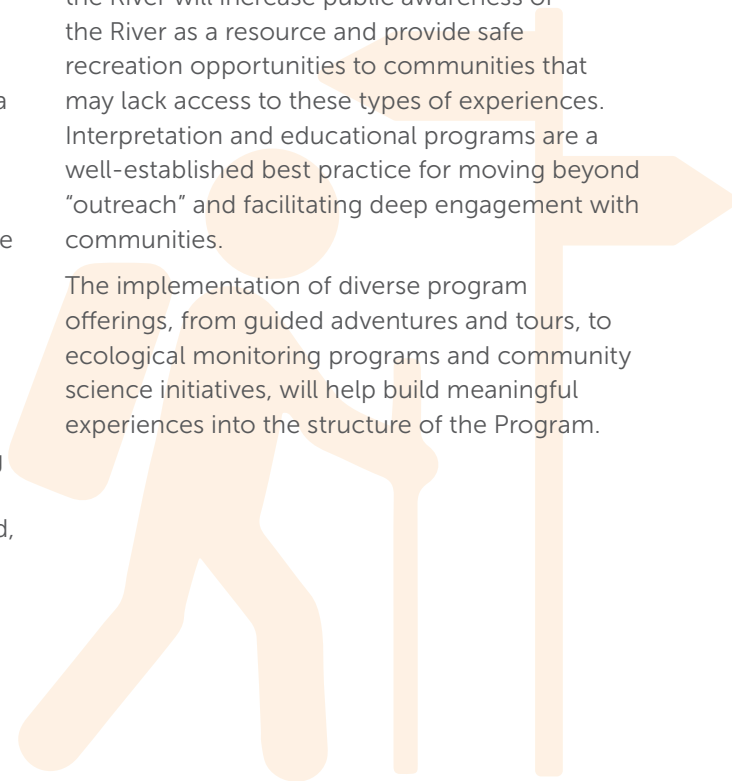
## RECREATION AND INTERPRETATION/ EDUCATION

Outcomes of the community outreach process indicate that recreational, interpretive and educational programs are a priority for safe use of the LA River, and that its greenways, trails and adjacent parks are of great importance. This data is consistent with the inventory of resources gathered during the planning process and in community feedback for the Lower LA River Revitalization Plan, a plan which documented the lack of education and recreation programs for the approximately one million residents within a one-mile radius of the Lower LA River.

A review of State Department of Resources Disadvantaged Community Data and CalEnviroScreen data for the communities along the LA River also shows that millions of low-income people of color live in densely populated, highly polluted neighborhoods without access to safe green and open space. Similarly, the Los Angeles Countywide Comprehensive Park & Recreation Needs Assessment found that over 50-percent of the County population lives in an area with high or very high park need.

Recreational and educational programs along the River will increase public awareness of the River as a resource and provide safe recreation opportunities to communities that may lack access to these types of experiences. Interpretation and educational programs are a well-established best practice for moving beyond "outreach" and facilitating deep engagement with communities.

The implementation of diverse program offerings, from guided adventures and tours, to ecological monitoring programs and community science initiatives, will help build meaningful experiences into the structure of the Program.





## Who is currently providing recreation and educational programs?

- California State Parks
- LA County Department of Parks and Recreation
- City of LA Department of Recreation and Parks
- Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority
- State Lands Commission
- Watershed Conservation Authority
- Non-governmental organizations

## WHAT DO STAKEHOLDERS SAY?

- Staff should lead regular tours and recreational activities in designated service areas.
- The Program should coordinate with educational agencies and community groups for watershed education programs to promote environmental science and stewardship principles.

## WHAT DOES THE PUBLIC SAY?

- 67% of survey respondents believe environmental education programming is an extremely important role for rangers, while 54% felt similarly about recreational programs.
- The top three topics respondents would like to learn about are natural history (birds, plants, water, etc.), trail access points, and water issues (flood control, water quality).
- Educational programming and well-maintained signage could help address concerns related to debris and water quality.

### Existing Education and Recreation Programs

- Future Urban Naturalist – Supported by Community Nature Connection (CNC); elementary education program designed for young students.
- Junior Rangers – Program supported by both the MRCA and WCA; targets young students.
- Watershed Education Tool – Tool developed by the Council for Watershed health (CWH) that can be used by Interpretive/Education staff and contracted partners for lesson plans appropriate for middle school students.
- River Ambassadors – MRCA model program for LA River education training and career development. This program was specifically designed to ensure opportunities for diverse students in LA County’s urban environment.
- Kayaking – Kayaking programs conducted by MRCA in the River Recreation Zones.
- Biking – Eco bike and nature tours hosted by the LA County Bike Coalition, East Yards for Environmental Justice, and LA Audubon.
- Equestrian – Equestrian activities conducted by various community organizations.
- Educational Walking Tours – Tours led by groups such as FOLAR and CWH about the history, ecology, and biodiversity of the River.

## RECREATION SERVICES

### In Channel

Recreation services within the River channel will occur seasonally and when conditions allow. Potential in-channel recreation activities will vary based on channel conditions and community desires. Activities may include fishing, kayaking, guided tours, art installations, outdoor movies, or performances. In-channel Program events will prioritize participant safety; will consider weather, channel conditions, and event size; and will comply with all relevant permitting procedures.

Staff will be responsible for securing all appropriate reservations, contracts, paperwork and equipment for execution of scheduled activities and events; as well as coordination and permitting with other agencies as required. Public agencies, nonprofits and educational institutions have a long history of successfully coordinating and implementing in channel recreational and educational activities. Examples include: The South East LA Arts Festival, the Great River Clean-Up, the LA River Monitoring Program and the MRCA Recreation Zone kayak tours. The River Ranger Program will build on this history of successful in-channel programs.

### River-Adjacent Areas

River-related recreation activities may occur on trails, bike paths, pocket parks, parks and other public open space adjacent to the River. Recreation services provided in the areas adjacent to the River may occur on a more regularly scheduled basis than those provided in the channel, yet will still need to respond to local conditions and community desires. Staff will be responsible for the planning, preparation, and execution of these services, or will coordinate with contracted partners to provide these services. As with in-channel events, River-adjacent programs will require careful review for participant safety and coordination with other agencies as required.

River-adjacent recreation events may include nature walks, guided tours, fitness events, bike or horseback rides, craft or food fairs, art installations, performances, or outdoor movies. The Program will coordinate with existing or similar efforts to engage diverse communities in activities along the LA River and support long-term recruitment and hiring goals.



## INTERPRETATION/EDUCATION SERVICES

Interpretation and educational programs will be offered on the River and in River-adjacent neighborhoods through collaboration with and direct programming by schools, community groups and other civic organizations. At a minimum, it is recommended that Interpretive/Educational programs incorporate three main roles: providing information about the River and its ecology through regular tours and recreational activities in designated services areas of the LA River; leading teams of staff and educational partners in monitoring natural resource conditions; and designing and coordinating with schools and other community groups for watershed education programs on the River and in the community. Programming and materials should be available in English and Spanish and additional languages as needed to meet community need.

### Educational Tours and Activities

Interpretation and educational programs will include River history and ecology tours. These programs can be as simple as guided walks that can accommodate all ages, languages, and abilities, or more adventurous activities such as educational bike tours, birding, or photography expeditions. Program materials should be created as necessary to accommodate language and literacy abilities within specific communities.

### Monitoring Natural Resource Conditions

Community Science programs are a cost effective and engaging program approach to help monitor the ecological conditions of the LA River. These programs can also unite residents in the Upper LA River with neighborhoods in the Lower LA River in common objectives and shared values, such as resource protection. Monitoring programs can offer students unique work experience and college credits, truly fulfilling the guiding principle and directive of legislation to utilize the LA River as an outdoor classroom. Examples include the MRCA River Ambassadors Program and the LA River Monitoring Program.

### Enhancing School –Based STEAM Education

Many public schools lack STEAM-based opportunities on campus. STEAM is an education approach that develops inquiry and critical thinking through science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics. The River Ranger Program will enlist the next generation of scientists, engineers and advocates in the protection, health and revitalization of the LA River through coordinated programs with local schools. Programs can include but are not limited to River field trips, junior naturalist training, workshops, and community science projects.

### Civic Art and Music Events

The River Ranger Program will use a range of traditional and innovative story-telling strategies to link history, art, and culture. A successful example of educating about the LA River through civic art and music events is the South East LA Arts festival and Movies Nights, located in the River channel. Civic art should also extend to interpretative signage and wayfinding, strategies which allow for independent educational experiences, as well as murals and street art. This may be achieved by engaging local artists or community groups.





### Guiding Principle

All visitors will be encouraged to utilize the River, and provided information and resources to ensure safe and resource-sensitive use.

## OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

The River Ranger Program must include a robust outreach and engagement effort to respond to the socioeconomic, cultural, and racial diversity of LA River communities. A variety of methods for information sharing and engagement strategies will be required to achieve this goal.

Outreach and engagement services provided by the Program are described in this section including public information, partner coordination, and ongoing community engagement.







## WHAT DO STAKEHOLDERS SAY?

- Providing up-to-date information regarding river conditions for the public is important.
- The Program should coordinate and collaborate with agencies and organizations providing homeless services along the River to create general homeless response and outreach strategy.

## WHAT DOES THE PUBLIC SAY?

- Of survey participants that have never visited the River, approximately 45% were most concerned about trash/debris and pollution/water quality, followed by maintenance and crime.
- Of the open-ended responses submitted regarding safety concerns, 45% referenced homeless or transient populations along the River, with comments regarding actual or perceived safety concerns.
- Participants indicated the need for Rangers to take a role in homeless outreach along the River.

## Who is currently providing Outreach?

- Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)
- City of Long Beach Homeless Services Division (HSD)
- City of LA Police Department
- Other city police and public works departments
- Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority
- Other non-governmental organizations

## What outreach activities are currently taking place?

- Numerous NGOs are focused on increasing community engagement with the River through volunteer and education opportunities.
- The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) works with city police departments and public works departments to contact homeless individuals, offer services, and assist with encampments removals.
- MRCA Rangers often make contact with individuals and try to connect them to street outreach programs organized by local homeless services agencies.

# OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT SERVICES

## Public Information

The River Ranger Program will support ongoing information and communication with residents, local groups and organizations, schools and collaborating public entities regarding opportunities for use and enjoyment in and around the LA River. The provision of clear, consistent and timely public information related to the safe use of the LA River has been identified as a priority by multiple stakeholders during the planning process for this Program and for the LLARP. Community members have highlighted the need for a centralized entity that can quickly provide information on changing conditions along the River. The Program should lead the effort to provide consistent and clear information along the River.

Strategies employed should include:

- Signage and printed materials (fliers, brochures, pamphlets etc.)
- Local advertising of events and programs.
- Establishment of easy-to-access information platforms that may include a centralized website, social media, and/or an information hotline that would provide information and connect visitors to appropriate contacts.

All communication should be made available in multiple languages and accommodate all ages.

## Partner Coordination

The program will facilitate ongoing information sharing and coordination with governing jurisdictions including but not limited to: LA County Flood Control, the USACE, cities with jurisdictions along the River, the MTA, public and private utilities, public schools and homeless services agencies. Information sharing and coordination with homeless service agencies, and relevant law enforcement agencies will be essential for implementing appropriate outreach strategies with homeless populations and for responding to critical public safety incidents. Regular information sharing and communication will also need to include program implementation partners such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) responsible for contracted training, education and recreational activities. The Program should maintain clear communication protocols, as well as a web-based platform and necessary infrastructure to support information sharing and coordination efforts.





## Ongoing Community Engagement

The Program will provide numerous opportunities for ongoing community engagement. Staff members should be identified to serve as liaisons with various groups (such as homeless populations), developing a Community Engagement Plan, and establishing a Community Advisory Committee for (CAC) for outreach, education and engagement; as well as through partnerships with CBOs and NGOs. Of particular importance will be the inclusion of Native American Tribes, especially in the development of historical information and interpretive/educational materials, and CAC membership.

A Homeless Outreach Strategy addressing strategies for engagement should be developed in cooperation with homeless services agencies, municipalities, and local law enforcement

agencies. Since all staff will be engaging with homeless populations to some degree, they will receive basic training on the outreach plan and best practices for agency coordination.

Other outreach and community engagement tools that can help meet Program goals include sponsorship of interpretive exhibits, presentations at local schools and community meetings civic institutions such as Neighborhood Councils, and COGs and special event production and/or coordination with local groups for such events, such as the SELA Arts Festival or Telenovelas in the Park.

## Core strategies for Outreach and Engagement:

- Public participation in program oversight through an Advisory Committee.
- A clear Outreach and Engagement Plan that establishes goals and metrics for evaluation.
- A Homeless Outreach Engagement Plan (developed in coordination with LAHSA, the City of Long Beach HSD and other agencies addressing homeless response).
- Ongoing information sharing with the public about River conditions, recreation and educational programs and public events.
- Regular information sharing with program implementation partners, including public agencies, contracted partners and volunteering groups.
- Meaningful public engagement in Program implementation (ongoing dialogue).
- Include NGOs and CBOs in program implementation and ensure community-based approach.



### Guiding Principle

All designated access points, trails, parks and open spaces along the Los Angeles River will be safe for visitors to enjoy.

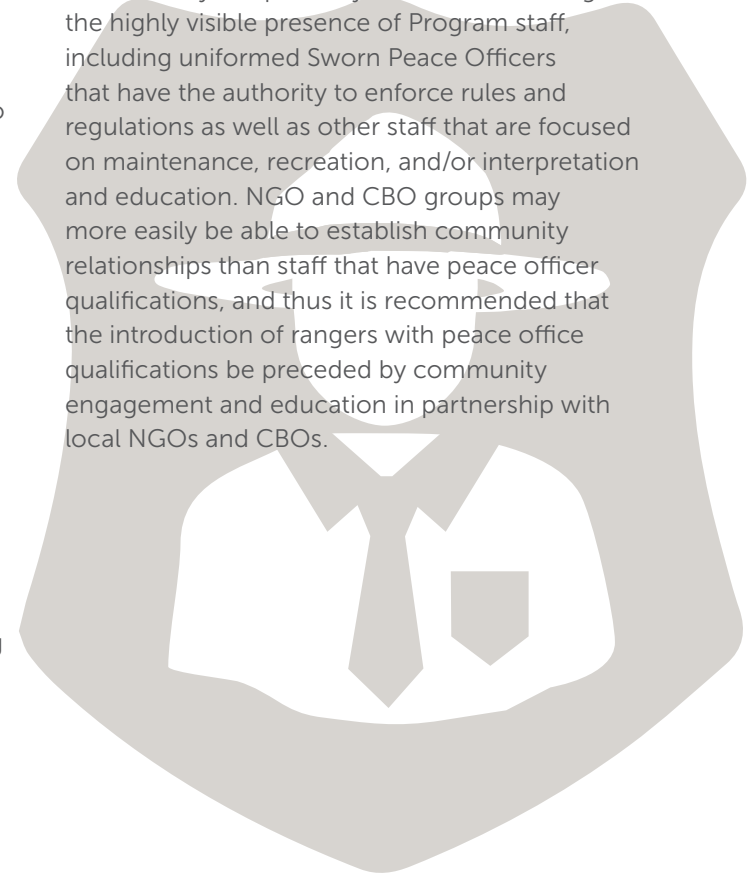
## PUBLIC SAFETY

Services provided under the previously discussed program areas will contribute to overall public safety along the River, including programs that encourage more people to recreate along the River, programs to install signage indicating which authorities to contact for assistance, and programs to ensure regular maintenance. This section, however, focuses on services specific to public safety presence.

Given that every community along the River has different public safety priorities, it will be critical that the Program provide public safety services that respond to local community needs. This topic is particularly relevant in many neighborhoods along the River where community relationships with law enforcement can be complicated and not always received as positive. Through the outreach survey, communities indicated that public safety is an important service for the River Rangers Program to provide. However, respondents also indicated that public safety achieved by staff providing recreational and educational programs, assisting

with maintenance, and interacting with the community is more desirable than a traditional law enforcement presence.

Public safety will primarily be achieved through the highly visible presence of Program staff, including uniformed Sworn Peace Officers that have the authority to enforce rules and regulations as well as other staff that are focused on maintenance, recreation, and/or interpretation and education. NGO and CBO groups may more easily be able to establish community relationships than staff that have peace officer qualifications, and thus it is recommended that the introduction of rangers with peace officer qualifications be preceded by community engagement and education in partnership with local NGOs and CBOs.





## WHAT DO STAKEHOLDERS SAY?

- Maintenance of public safety infrastructure and pathways should be a priority for Rangers. Law enforcement should only be a small component of their duties.
- Establishing an inviting and friendly presence is important.

## WHAT DOES THE PUBLIC SAY?

- 85% of respondents identified they felt unsafe when visiting the River.
- Differing opinions were presented regarding the role of a safety presence versus law enforcement presence on the River, and the responsibilities that a Ranger should undertake.
- Approximately 75% of respondents said that providing a "safety presence" was an extremely important role for River Rangers, while approximately 55% said that peace officer/law enforcement was an extremely important role.

## Who is currently providing Public Safety?

- LA County Sheriff's and Fire Departments
- City of LA Police Department, Fire Department, and Department of Recreation and Parks
- Local law enforcement in: Bell, Bell Gardens, Burbank, Downey, Glendale, Huntington, Long Beach, Montebello, Pasadena, San Fernando, South Gate, South Pasadena, and Vernon
- Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority rangers

## What activities are currently taking place?

- Numerous entities provide general safety and law enforcement activities.
- City and County Fire Departments are responsible for emergency response and employ Swift Water Rescue teams.
- Agencies will respond when there is an emergency call, they are not actively patrolling all areas under their jurisdiction, leading to inconsistent coverage along the River.
- MRCA offers generalist Ranger services, fire prevention and swift water rescues.



# PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES

## Public Safety

Public safety services, as required by AB 1558 include improving public safety for visitors and protecting park, open space, and other public space by protecting River visitors from physical hazards posed by the River environment as well as addressing criminal activity.

All staff will be trained in basic public safety techniques and will be responsible for ensuring visitors understand and abide by rules and regulations regarding River safety and appropriate use. Only Sworn Peace Officers (referred to as Sworn Peace Officer Rangers or Rangers) will have the authority to engage in law enforcement activities. In California, the title “ranger” can only be used by Sworn Peace Officers. Sworn Peace Officer Rangers will provide public safety services primarily through friendly patrols.

Program staff will contribute to public safety from dawn to dusk, and will help to address safety-related needs at all times, although personnel staffing may vary slightly depending on the season. Staff roles that contribute directly to public safety include:

- Proactively engaging with River visitors to ensure a safe River experience.
- Maintaining important public safety infrastructure, including phones, wayfinding signage, and lighting.

- Regulating channel access in designated areas.
- Supervising volunteer groups engaged in resource management and beautification activities to limit their exposure to hazardous conditions.

Staff who have received training in the Homeless Outreach Strategy (described above) may engage with homeless individuals that pose a public safety threat.

The Program will provide a platform for visitors to submit comments and photos to inform rangers of potential safety issues. This may be the same platform that is used to report maintenance issues, as described above.

## Coordination

Staff will be responsible for coordinating with other law enforcement agencies with jurisdiction along the River. Staff will respond to calls from a centralized LA River dispatch response center. Emergency calls placed through the 911 emergency system are the responsibility of local law enforcement, but staff may be called on for backup as necessary and as their certifications permit. All staff should have a working relationship with neighborhood patrol groups and other volunteers who may also monitor the River and report community issues.

In addition to regular coordination with local law enforcement entities, staff will coordinate with agencies and organizations that provide homeless response services to ensure homeless individuals receive appropriate assistance according to established jurisdictional protocols.

## Emergency Response

Staff that interface regularly with the public are required to be certified First Responders, and it is recommended that first aid equipment be supplied in all River Ranger Program vehicles. When called upon, Rangers and other designated staff will be able to assist local agencies with search and rescue, as well as swift water rescue. They will not be viewed as a replacement, but rather an asset to the existing city and Sherriff services, and other emergency responses that are currently taking place along the River in the event of an emergency.

## Fire Management

Due to climate change-induced heightening temperatures in the region and clandestine activities by homeless populations, the likelihood of fires in parks and natural open spaces along the LA River is increasing. Designated staff will be responsible for performing basic fire suppression within River-adjacent open spaces and assisting fire departments with larger blazes when called upon. Vegetation management will be the primary tactic to deter the start and spread of fires.



## ADMINISTRATION AND COORDINATION

A strong framework for administration and coordination will be necessary for the Program to provide the range of services, and thus each of the program areas described above integrates tasks related to Administration and Coordination.

Administration services necessary for Program success includes day to day management responsibilities that include human resource management and financial management, as well as the development of longer-term implementation strategies.

Coordination services include ensuring ongoing coordination amongst Program staff and contracted staff with different roles and/or that serve different areas of the River. In addition,

the Program must effectively coordinate with relevant federal, State, County, and city agencies; CBOs and NGOs; and community members. As part of coordination efforts, opportunities for collaboration can be identified and realized. Given the numerous entities that the Program will need to coordinate with and expansive geographic range within which the Program will operate, it is recommended that the Program implement a centralized system to track, maintain, and facilitate coordination efforts.



### Guiding Principle

Coordination and collaboration among agencies with jurisdiction over the River, organizations that provide services and programs, and members of the public is essential to providing dependable services that enhance the river as a natural and community resource. The River Ranger Program will act as a central conduit to bring together all parties involved.



# WHO STAFFS THE RIVER RANGER PROGRAM?

Meeting the actual and perceived needs identified by community and stakeholder feedback and fulfilling the various Program area roles described above will require a multifaceted delivery approach. This will be achieved by utilizing a tiered staffing model that includes multi-faceted Rangers that are trained as Sworn California Peace Officers, Program Staff (supplemented by contracted partners), and River Stewards. River Stewards are envisioned as trainees in the workforce development program. Partnerships with NGOs and CBOs will also contribute to the impact of the River Ranger Program through both contracted and volunteer efforts.

The tiered structure, as well as minimum requirements and recommended training for various positions, are described in the following pages. Regardless of tier, all Staff will share responsibility for welcoming visitors, providing a public safety presence, protecting and maintaining natural resources, engaging with local communities, informing and teaching, and hosting recreation programs. Staff from all tiers will also coordinate with relevant agencies to assist with maintenance and restoration activities, community engagement, and education services.

Staff should be assigned to specific areas of the River to provide a consistent public safety presence, and to facilitate management, supervision and evaluation. This will help develop

community relationships and encourage safe and lawful use of the resource by all community members.

The staffing model and descriptions were developed following stakeholder meetings, interviews with MRCA field rangers, and research on other ranger programs throughout California and across the country. Local ranger programs were used to inform the selection of desired qualifications and certifications specific to River Rangers, while stakeholder input and research influenced roles for the remaining Program staff.

### WHAT DOES THE PUBLIC SAY?

- Opportunities for career development and jobs are a priority.
- 29% of respondents indicated they were interested in future employment or volunteer opportunities.

### WHAT DO STAKEHOLDERS SAY?

- The Program could collaborate with local community colleges to develop curriculum and workforce development opportunities.
- State and local conservation corps could provide trainees for the workforce development program through contracts.



## Sworn Peace Officer Rangers

The primary responsibilities of these multi-faceted rangers will be to perform maintenance, community outreach, and assist with programming. Rangers will be sworn California Peace Officers, certified pursuant to the standards and training by the Park Rangers Association of California. This gives them the training to assist law enforcement officials de-escalate situations and give out appropriate citations in the event of illegal activities, though represents only a small fraction of their role. There are three levels of Sworn Peace Officer Rangers: Chief, Deputy Chief, and Ranger. Chiefs will play a stronger role in overall Program administration, while Rangers will be focused on directly serving the public.

## NGO and CBO Partnerships

Building community-based partnerships with NGOs and CBOs into the structure of the River Ranger Program will help staff have a better understanding of River visitors, and provide community members with employment and career development opportunities.

SWORN PEACE OFFICER RANGER	
SERVICES PROVIDED (Listed in order of how much time is spent on service)	Resource Management & Maintenance
	Public Safety Presence
	Recreation Programs
	Interpretation/Education
	Outreach & Engagement
	Law Enforcement
MINIMUM STANDARDS & CERTIFICATIONS	<b>Minimum Standards</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 21+ years of age</li> <li>• Verification of the right to work in the U.S.</li> <li>• Ability to perform duties which require physical strength and agility</li> <li>• California Driver's License</li> <li>• Two years (60 semester units) of study from accredited college or university</li> <li>• Two years of public safety, park ranger, river safety, lifeguard, law enforcement, fire, or EMS experience</li> <li>• Meet requirements of Government Code Section 1031 for employment as a California Peace Officer</li> </ul>
	<b>Certifications Required</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swift Water Rescue</li> <li>• Peace Officer Standards and Training level 3 Reserve Academy or higher</li> <li>• CA Code of Regulations Title 22 First Responder for Medical Services or higher</li> </ul>
OTHER RELEVANT CERTIFICATION/ EDUCATION/ EXPERIENCE	All items listed under River Stewards (see page 53), plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to comply with all California Peace Officer requirements, including lack of felony convictions, background check, physical and psychological suitability testing, reading and writing ability testing, and fingerprinting requirement</li> <li>• Ability to plan and implement training and employee development programs and evaluate performance of personnel</li> <li>• Ability to coordinate mutual aid operations with other agencies</li> <li>• 24 hours of continuing professional training every 2 years</li> <li>• Park Rangers Association of California (PRAC) Certificate</li> </ul>

## Program Staff and Contracted Partners

Program staff will include administrators, supervisory staff, and specialists in either river safety and maintenance or interpretation and recreation.

Administrators will be responsible for contracting, personnel, payroll, and coordination with the governing body, as well as managing public communications and the call center. Field supervision and coordination can be achieved by Program Staff and Sworn Peace Officer Rangers, described in the next section.

River Safety & Maintenance Specialists will be responsible for regular resource management and maintenance duties, as well as providing a public safety presence. Interpretation & Recreation Specialists will be responsible for leading educational and recreational programming. All Program staff will be responsible for supervising and training the River Stewards.

The roles of specialists may also be supplemented by contracted staff from NGOs, CBOs, and other agencies engaged in work along the River. Contracted staff will assist staff with maintenance, programming, and outreach. Partnerships with NGOs, CBOs, and other educational organizations will be especially important when establishing educational programming.

	PROGRAM STAFF & CONTRACTED PARTNERS	
	RIVER SAFETY & MAINTENANCE SPECIALIST	INTERPRETIVE & RECREATION SPECIALIST
SERVICES PROVIDED (Listed in order of how much time is spent on service)	Resource Management & Maintenance	Interpretation/Education
	Public Safety Presence	Recreation Programs
	Outreach & Engagement	Outreach & Engagement
	Recreation Programs	Resource Management & Maintenance
	Interpretation/Education	Public Safety Presence
MINIMUM STANDARDS & CERTIFICATIONS	<b>Minimum Standards</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18+ years of age</li> <li>• Verification of the right to work in the U.S.</li> <li>• Ability to perform duties which require physical strength and agility</li> <li>• California Driver's License</li> <li>• High school diploma; California High School Equivalency Certificate (G.E.D.); or California High School Proficiency Examination Certificate of Proficiency</li> </ul>	
	<b>Certifications Required</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swift Water Rescue</li> <li>• First Responder (can be obtained up to 3 months after hiring)</li> <li>• Certified California Naturalist</li> </ul>	
OTHER RELEVANT CERTIFICATION/ EDUCATION/ EXPERIENCE	All items listed under River Stewards (see page 53), plus:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior experience providing maintenance/ resource management services</li> <li>• River Operations Training</li> <li>• Study of ecology, biology, natural history of the LA River</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental education training</li> <li>• Leave No Trace</li> <li>• Interpretive Guide</li> </ul>



## River Stewards

The Program will include a River Stewards job training program that will train local community members to work in the Program. Hiring locally is critical, as every community along the River has a unique relationship with the River and different needs. Those working along the River must have an understanding of the adjacent communities to respond effectively to those needs in a way that promotes access, safety and other community benefits. Their primary responsibilities will be assisting Program staff.

It is recommended that the River Ranger Program launch a recruitment and training effort (further described on page 54) in cooperation with State and local conservation corps to support the resource management and maintenance needs in designated service areas along the River. Over time, River Stewards may be expanded into a stand-alone workforce development program unique to the River Ranger Program.



RIVER STEWARDS		
SERVICES PROVIDED (Listed in order of how much time is spent on service)	RESOURCE MANAGEMENT/ MAINTENANCE	INTERPRETIVE
	Resource Management & Maintenance	Interpretation/Education
	Public Safety Presence	Recreation Programs
	Outreach & Engagement	Outreach & Engagement
	Recreation Programs	Resource Management & Maintenance
	Interpretation/Education	Public Safety Presence
MINIMUM STANDARDS & CERTIFICATIONS	<b>Minimum Standards</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 16+ years of age</li> <li>• Verification of the right to work in the U.S.</li> <li>• Ability to perform duties which require physical strength and agility</li> <li>• High school diploma; California High School Equivalency Certificate (G.E.D.); or California High School Proficiency Examination Certificate of Proficiency; or currently enrolled in high school or a California High School Equivalency (G.E.D.) program working toward a diploma</li> </ul>	
	<b>Certifications Required</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic First Aid and CPR provided</li> </ul>	
OTHER RELEVANT CERTIFICATION/EDUCATION/ EXPERIENCE (NOT REQUIRED)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to follow written and oral instructions</li> <li>• Interest learning principles and practices used in conservation and interpretation of the LA River</li> <li>• Ability to learn to safely use tools and equipment on the job</li> <li>• Ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing, with colleagues and the public</li> <li>• Ability to learn to deal tactfully with individuals and groups</li> <li>• Satisfactory record as a law-abiding citizen</li> <li>• Ability to establish and maintain cooperative relations with public groups and organizations</li> <li>• Ability to apply theory to practical situations</li> <li>• Ability to analyze situations accurately and adopt an effective course of action</li> <li>• Ability to interpret and apply rules and instruction</li> <li>• Ability to lead and train seasonal staff</li> <li>• Local municipality and LAHSA Protocols for Engagement</li> <li>• Search and Rescue</li> <li>• Wildland Firefighting</li> </ul>	

# TRAINING APPROACH

## Staff Recruitment and Training

All staff will need training, performance standards, mentorship, and evaluation to be successful in their positions and ensure overall Program success, as well as uniform standardization and branding. While River Stewards participants will receive training necessary to become Program Staff, other motivated and qualified individuals who have not gone through the training program may also apply for staff positions. Once funding has been established and a governing entity has been approved, a timeline for recruitment, hiring, and training should be implemented.

All River Ranger employees should receive the same orientation training, with different layers of job-specific training required for various positions. Orientation training may include the following topics:

- Natural resource management
- Public safety
- First aid/CPR
- Visitor service and communication
- Outreach and coordination for homeless populations
- Maintenance and operations
- Interpretation/education
- Water resources (quality, flow & green infrastructure)
- Natural and cultural history of the LA River
- Leadership development

## River Stewards Job Training Approach

The recommended River Stewards job training approach is as follows:

- Partner with local NGOs, CBOs, and other educational organizations in River-adjacent communities to recruit local residents for training programs.
- Offer paid training that provides participants with the experience, skills, and certifications required for employment as a Program Staff.
- Hire Program Staff from participants, with recruitment goals that include a minimum number of hires from local communities.
- Offer continual training and mentorship opportunities for all participants, including opportunities to become a Sworn Peace Officer Ranger if desired.
- Provide opportunities for all participants to acquire experience, skills, and certifications that will help participants be competitive for a variety of jobs in river-allied fields including biology, park administration, fire protection and environmental sciences.







# 5:GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING





## HOW WILL THE PROGRAM BE GOVERNED AND FUNDED?

Realizing the vision for the LA River Ranger Program requires effective implementation strategies, including the identification of a governance structure and funding sources to support immediate and long-term implementation. This chapter recommends governance models to be further pursued and discusses potential funding strategies and sources. Stakeholder input directly informed the recommendations and resources put forth in this Plan, and thus key interview outcomes are referenced throughout this chapter as they relate to Plan recommendations.

### Recommended Governance Models

Potential options for governance that were explored during the planning process included (1) utilizing existing entity(ies), (2) establishing a new entity, and (3) using a piecemeal approach through an assemblage of bilateral partnerships. These models were evaluated in collaboration with Stakeholder agencies through Stakeholder Committee Meetings and one-on-one meetings with agency representatives.

**A governance model that utilizes existing entity(ies) emerged as the model that best meets the legislative intent of AB 1558** with consideration to funding and existing structures, resources, and relationships to achieve Program objectives. Other models explored during the planning process are summarized in Appendix C, Governance Models Explored.

Within the preferred governance model of utilizing existing entity(ies), the identification of the entity(ies) that will have governing authority has substantial implications to Program implementation. Two options were identified by the planning process as having high potential for short- and long-term success:

- Model 1: Cooperating Entities
- Model 2: Regional/Municipal Agency

Each of these models would provide a framework for implementing the services described in Chapter 4, and would require governing authority(ies) to coordinate with municipalities along the River and its tributaries, as well as federal, State, County, and local agencies currently managing activities. These options are summarized below and in Figure 5.1, Potential Governance Models. These models will be further developed in collaboration with potential governing entities and key stakeholders as stand-alone options, or combined into a third hybrid model that utilizes resources and strengths from each model.





## What do stakeholders say?

- Some stakeholders expressed concerns that it would be difficult to add to the existing mission and responsibilities of government departments or special districts, which could slow Program expansion.
- Stakeholders preferred a model with the least amount of moving parts if the managing entity was to utilize internal existing resources.
- The potential for a small jurisdiction to serve as governing authority is limited due to capacity issues and jurisdictional boundaries, unless in partnership with other municipalities or a regional or State agency. A governance structure that utilizes municipalities may struggle with the consistency and complexity of organizing services along the River.
- Federal implementation is not considered feasible because it could require Congressional authority.
- Some stakeholders voiced a desire for the development of a robust fiscal plan before selection of a governance model.

## GOVERNANCE MODEL 1: COOPERATING ENTITIES

Governance of the River Ranger Program by cooperating entities, such as a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) or Park District, was generally supported by Stakeholders and the Steering Committee as a viable governance model worth further exploration.

### What is a Joint Powers Authority?

JPAs are legally created entities between two or more public agencies, allowing them to jointly exercise common powers and often provide services in a more efficient and cost-effective manner.

### What is an Memorandum of Understanding?

MOUs articulate the roles and responsibilities of the involved parties, outline objectives with clear certainty, and establish the legal parameters of the agreement. MOUs create partnership expectations without a legally binding contract, which facilitates financial oversight and accountability, and allows for structuring with ancillary partners for program operation and management.

### Potential Entities

The existing entities with the greatest potential to govern under this model were identified as the **Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA) and Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority (MRCA)**, two JPAs working in the Los Angeles region on watershed and open space projects.

MRCA currently manages the two Los Angeles River Recreation Zones, and provides Ranger services for a range of parks and open space areas in Los Angeles County. The existing MRCA Ranger Program has established infrastructure and systems/processes that could be expanded upon or otherwise utilized to support hiring and management for the River Ranger Program, especially during initial implementation.

WCA manages six properties in the San Gabriel and Lower LA River Watersheds, and collaborates with local and regional entities to implement plans and projects related to trails, open space, parks, and urban greening that enhance watershed health. WCA has led junior watershed ranger programs and is experienced in conducting public outreach and engagement that promotes environmental values and river stewardship.

### Mechanism for Cooperation

Under this model, cooperating entities would manage the River Ranger Program through a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**, a non-binding agreement between two or more parties. Establishment of a stakeholder-based advisory group is recommended as it would facilitate coordination and implementation, and could include representatives from relevant agencies, regional conservancies, NGOs, and CBOs engaged in work along the LA River, and consultants familiar with revitalization efforts.



## Roles and Responsibilities

As illustrated in Figure 5-1, under this Model cooperating entities would work to hire and assign service territories with joint protocols. Staff would be hired, trained, and managed to provide all Program services.

The Program would operate with a combination of core full-time employees and contracted partners. Local NGOs, CBOs, and educational agencies could be contracted to assist with education and interpretation, while resource management and maintenance activities could be contracted out to State and local conservation corps. As part of the MOU, cooperating entities could establish a separate managing entity to be responsible for hiring and administrative activities.

Considerations for providing specific ranger services under this Model include:

- Maintenance and operations staff could be hired by the managing entity, with additional support through contracts with NGOs, CBOs, and State and local conservation corps. A second option is for JPAs to hire their own maintenance and operations support staff for specific zones, developing joint operating policies while maintaining separate personnel systems.
- The managing entity would hire administrative staff for communications, finance, and program management. In addition to general managerial and financial duties, they would be responsible for public relations, maintaining media platforms, establishing relationships with contracted partners, and coordinating between service areas. Additionally, the JPAs could help the managing entity develop joint communication protocols and a single contact for public information and complaints. MRCA's call center that handles calls related to MRCA-managed properties is a great example of effective communication tools.
- Sworn Peace Officer Rangers may be hired by the managing entity and assigned to service territories developed by the JPAs in the MOU. Alternatively, the cooperating entities could contract for sworn personnel (as currently done by WCA with MRCA rangers). This may be effective for early implementation.



### Model 1: Summary of Opportunities and Challenges

Overarching opportunities and challenges associated with this model are identified below.

#### Opportunities

- This model offers the most flexibility in developing and providing a program that meets the needs of communities. Utilizing JPAs also makes local hire programs more viable.
- Using existing institutions and relationships may expedite the initial program rollout, encourage participation, and position the program favorably for obtaining funding. This may also reduce initial capital and operations costs and expedite the contracting process.
- Establishing an MOU would clearly articulate the expectations and responsibilities of cooperating entities, including their specific roles related to management, to ensure the program achieves its mission and vision.
- Having State Conservancies and/or their JPAs in a managerial role may be helpful in building recognition amongst charitable foundations, which may open up additional funding opportunities.

#### Challenges

- To ensure program success, a strong management presence would be necessary to address local jurisdiction needs, roles, and priorities. JPAs such as WCA and MRCA are often responsible for large territories and may have a greater reliance upon collaboration with local jurisdictions and organizations to meet more local needs.
- Clear metrics would be needed to evaluate the relative success of Program services and identify challenges that may inhibit “up-scaling” in different services areas.





## GOVERNANCE MODEL 2: REGIONAL/MUNICIPAL AGENCY

Governance by an existing Regional or Municipal Agency is another option that should be considered for the River Ranger Program. An agency's established community relationships, familiarity with relevant issues, and their ability to utilize existing departments and contracts positions them favorably to manage the Program.

### Potential Entities

Given the County of Los Angeles's jurisdiction over the envisioned service area, it was identified as having particularly high potential to serve as one of the governing authorities under this model. An MOU could be established between LA County Departments and local municipalities, though other local, regional, and State entities have the potential to serve this role.

If the County of Los Angeles were to be the main governing entity, it could designate program responsibilities to the most relevant and qualified departments, including the County Department of Public Works, Department of Parks and Recreation, Sheriff's Department Parks Bureau,

and the Los Angeles County Flood Control District. In communities along the River that may be sensitive to an outside agency's presence to assist with law enforcement, local cities could provide services through their department staff that may have better relationships with local residents.

Organizations already involved in homeless outreach work that could be involved include, but are not limited to, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) and the City of Long Beach Homeless Services Division (HSD).

### Roles and Responsibilities

Under this Model, hiring would be the responsibility of the human resource department within the governing agency. Since it is anticipated that the agency may utilize some of its existing resources and personnel, the hiring process will follow their standard procedures. Public safety services relating to illegal activities and crime can be provided by local law enforcement agencies. The governing agency would develop position specifications for field and administrative staff, and hire either directly or through contracts with the JPAs, NGOs or CBOs to provide these positions.

The conservation corps currently have contracts with the County Parks and Recreation and Public Works Departments to provide maintenance and restoration assistance, which could be utilized or modified to reference and support the new Program if the County is identified as one of the governing agencies. This would be especially beneficial during initial Program implementation.



### MODEL 2: Summary Opportunities and Challenges

Overarching opportunities and challenges associated with this model are identified below.

#### Opportunities

- Utilizing a regional or municipal agency increases the potential for multi-jurisdictional support.
- Many municipalities and local agencies are already engaged in joint efforts to address environmental and community needs, and the Program could take advantage of these relationships.
- The agency's existing obligations and responsibilities in communities may allow for a wider reach that can help maximize their efforts, and increase the potential for more readily available funding.

#### Challenges

- Ensuring transparent administration can be more difficult to achieve if the governing agency is a large, multi-faceted entity.
- Management roles should be separated from existing departments to the extent possible, and must be clearly defined in order to develop a clear Program structure.
- Certain services, such as interpretation and education expertise, would still need to be contracted, and a longer contracting process is more likely.
- Implementing the Program may require existing agency roles to be amended in order to meet Program needs.
- Some municipalities may be less inclined to provide financial support given naturally occurring jurisdictional complexities. Some stakeholders voiced concerns about the potential "unfair competition" between different implementation areas caused by community interest and funding. Facilitation may be necessary to ensure that various entities and staff roles collaborate as a single unit.
- Local hire directly through the agency would not be plausible.

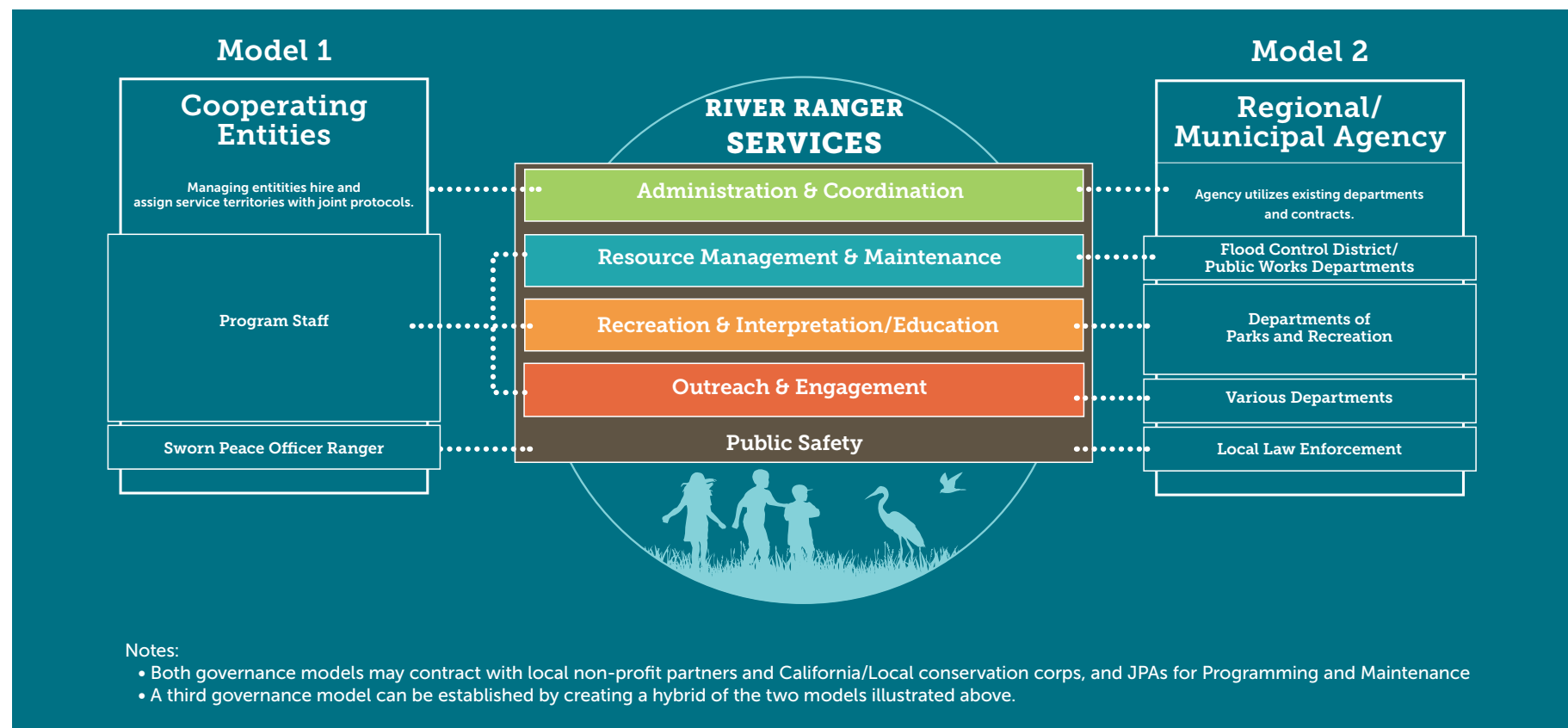


Source: US Army Corps





Figure 5. 1, Potential Governance Models



### Governance Model 3: Hybrid Approach

A third governance model can be established by creating a hybrid of the two models illustrated above. A hybrid model could allow variations in the roles and relationships between governing entities, utilizing strengths and resources from each model. For instance, a hybrid could be developed as a variation on the Cooperating

Entities model through which regional or municipal agencies provide staff or funding for maintenance, law enforcement or other services along sections of the River that are maintained by a certain entity, including the City of Los Angeles, LA County, or their respective departments. This can be established through MOU's or cooperating agreements to solidify

the agreements. Alternatively, the hybrid could be a variation on the Regional/Municipal Agency model in which the Program could be operated by a partnership between two or more agencies, or where partnerships could be established cooperating entities (such as JPAs) to provide services such as educational and recreational programs.

## FUNDING STRATEGIES AND SOURCES

The Program will require both a dedicated source of funding and supplemental funding from various avenues in order to provide all services listed in Chapter 4. This is particularly true due to its size and scale, and the fact that it includes a law enforcement component. Securing sustainable funding for operations, maintenance, and staffing would likely require a combination of revenue sources, some of which are described below. While sources may differ between initial implementation and the long-term program, it is important to establish a viable base to facilitate Program expansion. Additional funding partnerships were identified during the one-on-one agency stakeholder meetings as possible sources for the long-term Program.

### Existing Funding Sources

#### Los Angeles County Flood Control District

The Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LACFCD) may be able to fund capital improvements in areas within its jurisdiction. Considering their current operations and maintenance responsibilities, they may be able to utilize existing maintenance funding for the River Ranger Program.

### Individual Jurisdictions along the LA River

Individual jurisdictions along the LA River already fund maintenance, resource management, public safety, outreach and engagement activities, and recreational and educational programs. For example, the City of Los Angeles currently contributes a portion of funding to operate the seasonal Los Angeles River Recreational Zone. Individual jurisdictions could partner and combine their resources to provide some River Ranger services. They also could redirect funds to a River Ranger program implemented by another entity.

If a regional River District with jurisdiction over portions of the LA River were to be established in the future, it could be seen as a potential funding source for the River Ranger Program.





### Measure H—Los Angeles County, California, Sales Tax for Homeless Services and Prevention

Measure H added 0.25 percent to the sales tax countywide to provide an expected \$355 million annually for services and programs to prevent and combat homelessness. This funding could be used to provide assistance to homeless individuals and families along the Los Angeles River and its tributaries. Some portion of the River Ranger Program may be eligible for Measure H funds. Applying for Measure H funds could be a strategic opportunity for the River Ranger Program to design and implement uniform response protocols in collaboration with LAHSA.

### Measure A—the Safe, Clean Neighborhood Parks and Beaches Protection Measure of 2016

Measure A established a countywide parcel tax that generates an expected \$94 million annual funding stream. The measure establishes a dedicated annual funding stream for each jurisdiction in the county, as well as funding for grants for habitat improvements, watershed health, and open space (including improvements or restoration of areas that buffer rivers, streams, and tributaries). Operational costs of a River Ranger Program would be eligible for Maintenance and Servicing funds only within those locations that were acquired or improved with Measure A or Proposition A funds. The amount available for annual maintenance allocations is less than was previously available from Proposition A, and a new program would likely be in competition with existing park operational needs. Measure A's Recreation Access Programs (under Categories 3 and 4), which are anticipated to be awarded through a competitive grant process, are intended to fund recreation access programs that increase accessibility to public lands, park facilities, and park amenities, including education, interpretive services, safety information, and transportation. Additionally, competitive grants under Measure A's Youth and

Veteran Job Training and Placement Program (Category 5) will provide funds for "education and skills" training and "certification and job placement" programs. These grant funds could help fund components of the River Ranger Program, although not on a permanent basis.

### US Army Corps of Engineers

The US Army Corps of Engineers could assist the Program in identifying federal funding options for River maintenance and public outreach related to the River Ranger Program.

### Environment and Water Bonds

Various State bonds, such as Propositions 1 and 68, provide funding for park and water projects. However, these funds must comply with General Obligation Bond Law, which requires that the funds be used for capital assets. The eligibility of River Ranger activities should be analyzed.

### Funding Partnerships

#### Center for a Competitive Workforce

The River Ranger Program could establish a partnership with the Center for a Competitive Workforce to develop outreach and workforce opportunities. The Center for a Competitive Workforce is working to identify high-growth careers that impact the river corridor and align them with workforce career pathways, which could be used to develop a workforce model for the River Ranger Program beyond the maintenance jobs offered by the conservation corps. Research funding and grants associated with the study could help fund expanded local employment and training opportunities, though it is unclear how much the Program itself would receive.

#### LA Metro

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro) is responsible for many transportation corridors and multi-use trails along the River, including the LA River Bike Path and its future eight-mile expansion from Elysian Valley to the City of Vernon and Maywood. LA Metro could be a strategic funding partner as it completes the River Path project, provided the River Ranger Program is able to assume maintenance and public safety responsibilities of this new river pathway and other LA Metro projects related to trails.

#### City of LA Department of Water and Power

The Department of Water and Power (DWP) owns many key parcels along the corridor, currently closed to the public, that have the potential to increase river access and recreation opportunities. DWP may be able to provide funding for habitat restoration, landscaping, and employment on DWP-owned properties if the Rangers assume responsibility from existing department security for monitoring public safety.





## Other Funding Sources

### Community Facilities Districts

Community Facilities Districts (CFDs) may be established to provide new recreation program services, the operation and maintenance of museums and cultural facilities, maintenance of parks, parkways, and open space, flood and storm protection services, and new or increased police protection services, as well as a wide variety of capital infrastructure. CFDs may be established by cities, counties, and joint powers authorities in the area within their jurisdiction, but require approval by two-thirds of the electorate. A CFD can establish a special tax that is not tied to the value of a special benefit or the taxable assessed value of properties, and can issue bonds to fund capital infrastructure.

### Grant Funding

Grant funding may be used for relevant portions of the LA River Ranger program. Typically, grant funding is available on a one-time or short-term basis and is used for capital projects or establishing a new program. Most likely, grant funding will not be available for the ongoing provision of services. Potential grant programs include the Caltrans Active Transportation Program and philanthropic entities.

### Private Sector Investment

Private Sector investment could fund both capital investments and ongoing services. The governing entity could solicit corporate and philanthropic contributions, and/or establish sponsorships and naming opportunities.

### Enterprise Activities

Enterprise activities may also provide funding. Activities could include but are not limited to special use permits, parking fees, leases, and filming fees.

### State Budget/General Fund

Funding could be appropriated in the State Budget or by any other local entity with a general fund, including LA County and local municipalities which can approve direct appropriations to the River Ranger Program.

### Donations

Donations from individuals and/or friends groups could fund both capital investments and ongoing services. However, as State entities cannot receive donations, donations would have to be set up through an entity such as a 501c3.

### Enhanced Infrastructure Finance District

Enhanced Infrastructure Finance Districts (EIFDs) are governed by a public finance authority, and established to finance public capital facilities or other specified projects that provide benefits to the district or the surrounding community. EIFDs can finance traditional public works, such as transportation, transit, parks and libraries, water and sewer facilities, solid waste disposal, and flood control and drainage. A \$40 million Los Angeles River Revitalization EIFD is in the planning stages, which will cover an 11-mile segment of the 51 mile LA River. Since funds are specifically for infrastructure, the River Ranger Program would only be able to utilize these for facility and River maintenance activities.

### Tax Increment Financing Bonds

Cities and counties could use tax increment financing (TIF), an increase in tax revenues generated by development to repay bonds issued to finance necessary infrastructure and other improvements. TIF bonds may be issued under specific circumstances.





# 6: PROGRAM ROLLOUT



## PROGRAM ROLLOUT

Providing service along all 51-miles of the Los Angeles River and its tributaries is a key goal of the River Ranger Program. However, to ensure long-term success of the River Ranger Program, secure sustainable funding sources, and test implementation strategies, it is recommended that the Program first be initiated at strategic locations and expanded over time to encompass the envisioned service area.

The strategic locations recommended for initial implementation are referred to as REACH Zones in this Plan. **REACH is an acronym for River Education, Adventure, Community, and Habitat** (key services provided by the Program), and referring to these areas as “zones” builds upon the recognized concept of Los Angeles River Recreation Zones.

This chapter describes how the River Ranger Program will be rolled-out through the establishment of REACH Zones, provides planning-level cost estimates for initial rollout, and identifies specific action items for implementation.

### REACH Zones as a Tool for Implementation

The River Ranger Program rollout will begin with the establishment of one or more REACH Zones, and will grow through the expansion of these initial Zones and establishment of additional REACH Zones. REACH Zones will be distributed between the upper and lower River reaches, and potentially along major tributaries. Every REACH Zone will be an opportunity to assess the managerial organization and sustainability of the River Ranger Program, and to refine the Program to best meet overall Program needs, as well as needs of specific communities. While the Program will provide the same baseline services for all REACH Zones, services within each REACH Zone will need to be tailored to meet specific environmental conditions and community interests and concerns.

### Purpose of Initial REACH Zones

The purpose of initial REACH Zones is to establish small (three to four miles long), targeted sites to evaluate opportunities and challenges that will influence expanded programming along the entire 51-mile long River. Initial REACH Zones refer to all REACH Zones established within the first three years of the River Ranger Program rollout. This will allow the Program to:

- Test a proposed model with pre-identified short-term metrics.
- Achieve a successful rollout in significant areas of the LA River.
- Build momentum for expanded implementation of programming.
- Identify capacity of funding partners.



## REACH Zone Program Criteria

The River Ranger Program is envisioned as one strategy in the comprehensive effort to revitalize the Los Angeles River and watershed. While conditions, needs, and opportunities along the River differ, the foundational framework for Program rollout should be consistent. The criteria described below should inform selection, development, and evaluation of initial REACH Zone programs, with sites that meet a majority of the criteria selected as an initial location.

**1. Timeliness and River Ranger Program readiness.** As a key function of initial REACH Zones is to catalyze Program implementation, it is essential that initial REACH Zones can be launched on a relatively quick timeline that meets any legislated deadlines. Factors that may affect Program readiness include site conditions, community context and support, and funding.

**2. Existing relationships with public agencies.** Initial REACH Zones should be developed in partnership with public agencies. During initial implementation, certain Program services may be provided in partnership with existing agencies that have been providing services. Managing entities for REACH Zones must be able to

identify relevant law enforcement agencies responsible for the region where the Program is located, and establish preliminary agreements describing coordination and enforcement service area expectations. These may inform law enforcement agreements for the long-term Program.

**3. Support from local political and community stakeholders.** To facilitate successful implementation, initial REACH Zones must have the support of local political and community stakeholders. In addition to demonstrated support of the River Ranger Program's objectives to increase ecological, social, and economic resiliency along the River, the local community should ideally demonstrate commitment of local funding, material, or volunteer resources.

**4. Demonstrate funding certainty.** The managing entity should be able to provide sustainable funding source(s) for the first three years of implementation of any new REACH Zone. Securing permanent funding is not required, but potential strategies should be identified and explored following initial implementation.

**5. Establish clear roles and responsibilities.** The Program should definitively outline the expected responsibilities of administrative managers and all other Program staff. The organizational structure should be conveyed

to the public in a transparent and concise manner to limit confusion regarding the roles of staff and other entities already engaged in River activities.

**6. Achieve clear impacts in both legislative and community priorities.** It is important that initial REACH Zones are sited to achieve meaningful impacts with consideration to both legislative and community priorities. Initial REACH Zones must have clear and feasible goals, including site-specific goals and the development of Program components that are replicable.

**7. Capacity to meet local hiring needs.** All initial REACH Zones should identify opportunities to employ local community members. This may require building relationships with job agencies to foster future economic stability and support job growth.

## LOCATING REACH ZONES

The location of a REACH Zone may be limited by the Program components and/or by local agency and community partners. In other cases, REACH Zone program proposals may be appropriate for numerous potential locations.

Initial REACH Zones should be located to best meet the Program Criteria previously described, and to provide a balanced distribution of initial REACH Zones with consideration to existing site conditions, geographic context, and community context. Initial REACH Zone locations should be implemented in communities in both the upper and lower river reaches that cumulatively represent the Los Angeles River's variability and intrinsic diversity.



### Considerations for Location Selection

When selecting locations for individual REACH Zones, the following site-based considerations should inform site-selection and Program development. Locations do not need to meet all considerations favorably to be selected as an initial REACH Zone.

- **Does the site have existing public access features?** Existing access features are likely to increase Program success and potential opportunities. Initial REACH Zones should ideally include existing access features such as a park or open space areas, trails, or bike paths. Areas with limited accessibility may reduce programming options during initial implementation, but may be considered where programming would be likely to provide long-term community impact.
- **Have safety or other concerns been identified as a barrier to access?** Locations where safety or other concerns have been identified as barriers to access have high potential to benefit from the Program, especially where there are existing public access features. However, if addressing the type of existing barriers are beyond the scope of services offered by the River Ranger Program, a REACH Zone may not be appropriate until underlying issues (infrastructure or other) have been resolved.
- **Are education or recreation programs currently offered, or could they be easily implemented?** Areas that already offer recreational opportunities, along with the necessary infrastructure, and educational programming, may be ideal for initial REACH Zone selection, with the intention of solidifying and expanding on successful programming. Locations that currently do not offer programming but contain existing facilities or amenities that could support the program, may also be effective incubators as they could serve as a model for Program expansion in underserved areas consistent with revitalization efforts.
- **Does the surrounding community include DAC or High Needs Areas?** River revitalization has the potential to improve equitable outcomes in health, recreation, education, and job opportunities for underserved communities identified as Disadvantaged Communities (DAC) or as having High Need or Very High Need for parks. DACs are defined by the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHHA) as the top 25% of communities identified in CalEnviroScreen as disproportionately burdened by and vulnerable to multiple sources of pollution, "along with other areas with high amounts of pollution and low populations." High Need or Very High Need for parks are designations from the Los Angeles County Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Needs Assessment.

- **Do the existing conditions offer a safe and meaningful experience?** REACH Zones with conditions that allow visitors of all ages and abilities to observe and engage with the River safely may facilitate meaningful experiences, whether they stay for a few minutes or a few hours.

## Potential Locations

REACH Zones may be comprised of existing publicly accessible parks, trails and open space, as well as areas adjacent the River channel that have the potential to provide public access. REACH Zones are likely to be comprised of more than one location type, with focus areas for programming located at key access or use areas. This section describes these areas and their implications on REACH Zone development.



## Existing Publicly Accessible Parks and Open Space

The following examples of publicly accessible parks and open spaces along the River could accommodate the initial Program rollout. Specific locations within each category will be identified with consideration to criteria and considerations discussed above.

### Los Angeles River Recreation Zones

There are two River Recreation Zones operated and maintained by MRCA: one at Elysian Valley upstream of Lewis MacAdams Riverfront Park (formerly Marsh Park) and the other in the Sepulveda Basin. The Recreation Zones are open from Memorial Day through Labor Day and operate from sunrise to sunset daily, offering designated areas for visitors to walk, fish, and use non-motorized boats such as kayaks. MRCA currently provides river trail guides and maps that enable the public to access and enjoy the River. The Elysian Valley Zone is 2.5 miles long, passing five MRCA-owned parks. The Sepulveda Basin Zone is two miles long, though pedestrian access is limited downstream to a designated trail due to the presence of sensitive habitat. The City of Los

Angeles Bureau of Sanitation staff sample and test water twice a week at three locations in each Recreation Zone during the recreation season.

REACH Zones could expand upon and make consistent the services provided in these areas. As MRCA is currently responsible for managing a robust portfolio of parks and open spaces along the River, there is potential for MRCA to play a key role in implementing REACH Zones in these areas. For instance, MRCA Rangers would be able to continue operating with expanded programming and responsibilities using existing infrastructure. Their understanding and familiarity with river conditions and parks in the Recreation Zones, as well as established ties with the adjacent community, would allow the Program to focus on the novel additions to the ranger's responsibilities.

### Parks

Parks in Los Angeles County that provide access points to the River cover a vast array of river conditions and offer unique experiences for visitors, making them ideal locations for initial REACH Zones. Recreation opportunities at River-adjacent parks include fishing, hiking, biking, relaxing, horse riding, birdwatching, swimming, and picnicking.



Coordination with cities, the County, and local agencies would be necessary to align the Program with existing maintenance, recreation, and law enforcement activities. REACH Zones could be located in small or large parks that represent the diversity of conditions present along the channel, from parks with limited access due to fences and channelization to those with open access to riparian habitats, allowing for different recreation and education activities to be tested. Popular parks with recreational programming that could complement the objectives of REACH Zones include Griffith Park, Elysian Park, Hollydale Park, Hahamongna Park, Maywood Riverfront Park, and Shoreline Aquatic Park.

Many parks and open spaces in the upper reaches of the River are managed by the City of LA Department of Recreation and Parks (LARAP). LARAP may be able to capture potential funding opportunities for programming and outreach if a REACH Zone is established within one of their parks. A partnership could also facilitate a law enforcement agreement, since LARAP rangers currently do not patrol the river channel.

### Pocket Parks

Pocket parks are small, publicly accessible parks that provide greenery, a space for relaxation, and occasionally a small play structure. Their size would make safety patrol and maintenance

manageable for Program staff, while also facilitating focused education opportunities. The Glendale Narrows is filled with pocket parks, including Rattlesnake Park, Marsh Park, and Elysian Valley Gateway Park, which allow visitors to experience soft-bottom areas of the River and provide areas for picnicking, walking, biking, and relaxing. Parque Dos Rios, a soon to be constructed park just south of the Rio Hondo River and LA River confluence, will offer native habitat and wildlife viewing and a resting spot along the LA River Bike Path. Public safety and homeless encampments may be a concern at pocket parks along the River under freeways and in heavily vegetated areas, though these challenges should not discourage potential REACH Zones, especially those focused on outreach.

### Other Publicly Accessible Open Space

Open spaces within the County are prime landscapes for REACH Zones. REACH Zones would establish a significant and dedicated presence along the River, since County or local agency staff responsible for managing the lands have multiple responsibilities and are unable to patrol the channel at all times. Environmental and nonprofit organizations already engaged in restoration and education in these areas could become key partners, with the REACH Zone allowing for expanded events and field trips for visitors and local schools. The Sepulveda Basin

Wildlife Reserve and Recreation Area along the upper LA River is one example of an accessible open space, offering multiple parks, ample facilities, bike paths, kayaking opportunities, and a few soft-bottom sections of the River for visitors to enjoy wildlife. Dominguez Gap and DeForest Park Wetlands are popular locations in the lower river area that could support similar programming.

### Trails

REACH Zones could also include or consist of one or more of the many pedestrian and multiuse trails running along the Los Angeles River and its tributaries. Forming important community and park linkages, their ideal relationship to the River will allow rangers/staff to focus on public safety and maintenance activities that will enhance visitors' experience of the River. The Los Angeles River Greenway, also known as the Los Angeles River Bike Path, consists of two disconnected segments, the first beginning near the Glendale-Burbank border and running south to Los Angeles' Egret Park, and the second resumes in Vernon, meeting up with the Rio Hondo River Trail before draining to the Pacific Ocean in Long Beach. As gaps are completed in the Greenway, new opportunities for the River Ranger Program are anticipated.



## Other Open Space/Potential Future Public Space

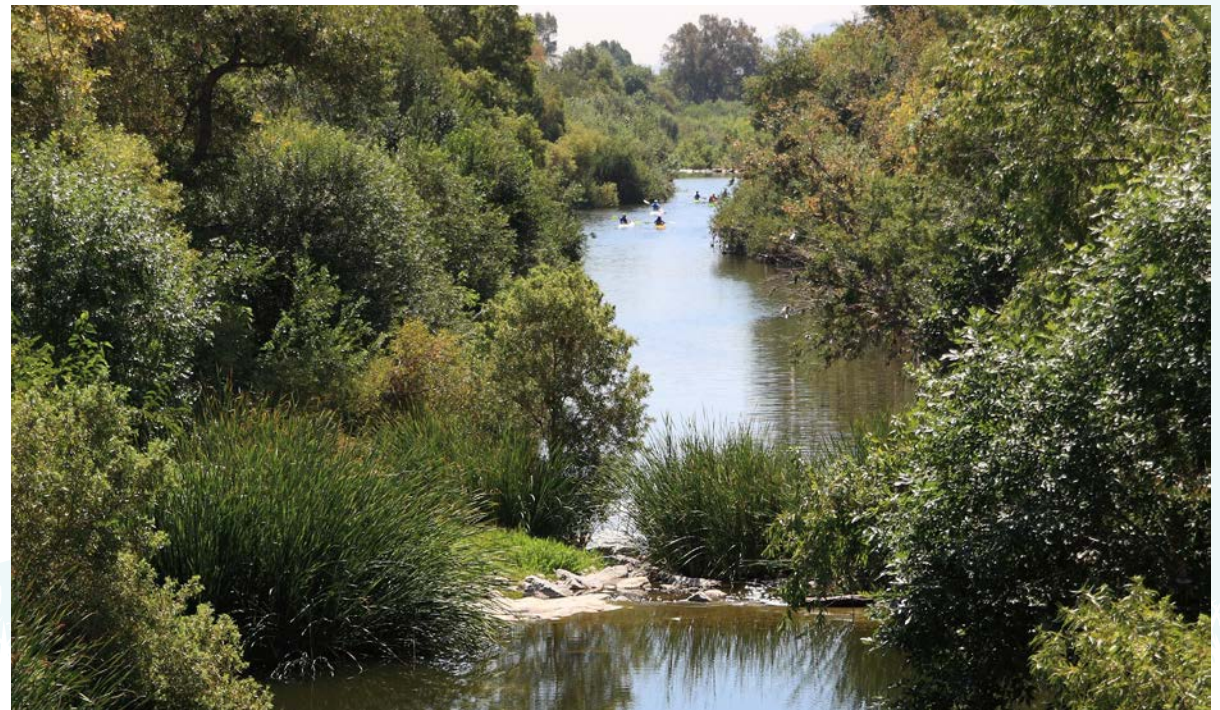
As part of recent river revitalization efforts, there are many proposed parks and open spaces along the River that will enhance its ecological function and public accessibility. These spaces would be ideal for REACH Zones due to the necessity for public safety, maintenance, and recreation management at these newly established sites. Staff duties may be an expansion on

existing maintenance and restoration efforts in neighboring parks and open spaces. The Lower Los Angeles Lower River Revitalization Plan (LLARP) identified signature projects for River and park enhancements, providing conceptual plans and programming for areas including the confluence of the Los Angeles River and Rio Hondo near Hollydale Park. Another planned project that could be included within a REACH Zone is WCA's Parque dos Rios.

The City of LA Department of Water and Power (LADWP) also owns many valuable parcels along the River, which could be opened to the public if staff can provide secured access to LADWP-owned land and regular patrols. LADWP powerline easement and corridors may also provide useful multi-use trails as well.



Source: LA Department of Transportation



Source: US Army Corps of Engineers

## STAKEHOLDER INPUT

Participants at Stakeholder Meeting 6 were given a map of the LA River highlighting parks and open space, trails, disadvantaged communities, and other amenities within one mile of the river. They were asked to review five “considerations for location selection” and then share preliminary ideas for potential REACH Zone locations. The “considerations” are provided on page 74 of this plan and address park access, educational and recreational programming, safety concerns, and the experience of the River.

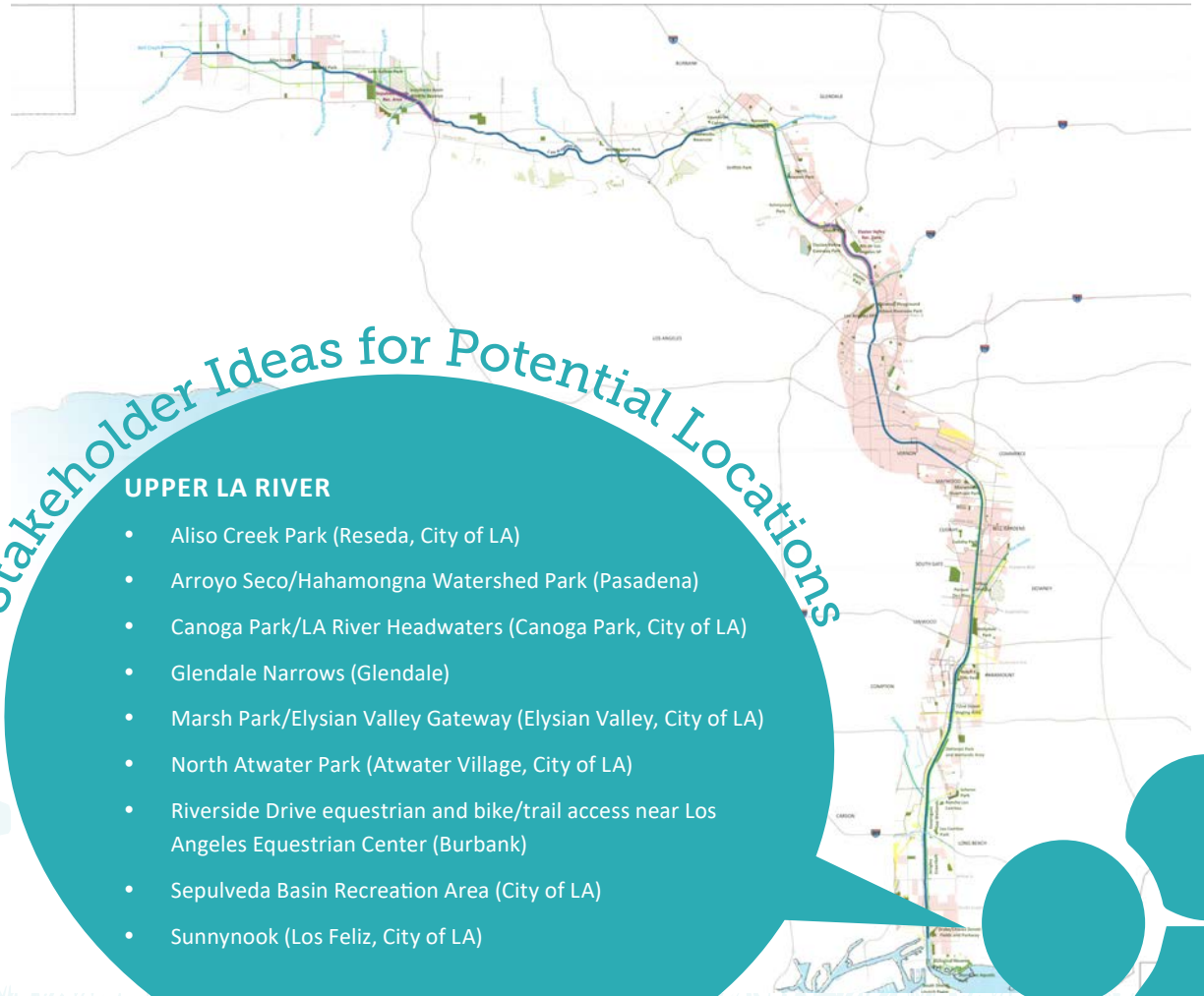
Ideas identified by stakeholders are listed in the following pages in alphabetical order. Common reasons for selecting sites included: good access to the River, heavy use, identified as opportunity sites in other plans, high potential for volunteer and education opportunities, proximity to disadvantaged communities, and existing public safety and homeless concerns.

**Preliminary ideas demonstrate the range of opportunity sites, and will be considered for further evaluation along with other opportunity sites identified by community members and stakeholders.**

### Stakeholder Ideas for Potential Locations

#### UPPER LA RIVER

- Aliso Creek Park (Reseda, City of LA)
- Arroyo Seco/Hahamongna Watershed Park (Pasadena)
- Canoga Park/LA River Headwaters (Canoga Park, City of LA)
- Glendale Narrows (Glendale)
- Marsh Park/Elysian Valley Gateway (Elysian Valley, City of LA)
- North Atwater Park (Atwater Village, City of LA)
- Riverside Drive equestrian and bike/trail access near Los Angeles Equestrian Center (Burbank)
- Sepulveda Basin Recreation Area (City of LA)
- Sunnynook (Los Feliz, City of LA)





# Stakeholder Ideas for Potential Locations

## LOWER LA RIVER

- Compton Creek (Compton)
- DeForest Park Wetlands Area (Long Beach)
- Dominguez Gap Wetlands (Long Beach)
- Ford Park (Bell Gardens)
- Long Beach Estuary (Long Beach)
- Maywood Riverfront Park (Maywood)
- Ricardo Lara Linear Park (Lynwood)
- Rio Hondo/LA River Confluence (and adjacent parks)
- Veteran's Park (Commerce)



Stakeholder Meeting 6 participants recorded ideas for potential sites using worksheets and maps.

## COST ESTIMATE FOR INITIAL ROLLOUT

The cost for initial Program rollout is estimated at just under \$2 million per REACH Zone for the first year, including startup and initial training costs, and is expected to decrease in subsequent years depending on training needs, as shown in Table 6.1. This cost estimate was developed based largely on current staffing and associated costs of MRCA's ranger and staff activities in two existing River Recreation Zones within the upper LA River. The actual cost will be dependent on the number, size, and level of services offered within REACH Zones and should be re-assessed as the initial rollout strategy is further developed.

Assuming that four REACH Zones are implemented during initial rollout, the total program is estimated at approximately \$7.9 million, including initial startup and training costs which are estimated at \$330,400 per REACH Zone. The cost per REACH Zone has the potential to decrease due to operating efficiencies as additional Zones are implemented, or increase if programming is expanded.

### Cost Estimate Assumptions

- **Extents.** The average length of a REACH Zones is 3.0 miles.
- **Services.** Specific services provided during initial implementation may vary, but will include resource management and maintenance, public safety services, recreation and interpretation/education, and outreach services based on site opportunities and local needs. Services provided by River Stewards and other contracted partners will also vary based on the season.
- **Sworn Peace Officer Rangers.** A Chief will oversee public safety for up to four initial REACH Zones. A Deputy Chief will assist the Chief, and each REACH Zone will have up to three rangers.
- **Program Staff and Contracted Partners.** One staff supervisor will manage up to four sites. Each REACH Zone will have an average of 4.5 specialists. A portion of the budget may go towards contracted partners who will provide recreation, education, and engagement assistance.
- **River Stewards.** Each REACH Zone will have the equivalent of six River Stewards provided through a partnership with the Conservation Corps.
- **Annual Operating Expenses.** It is assumed that operating expenses will include costs for vehicles, materials, supplies, signage, and uniforms, as well as additional expense items such as disposable supplies. These estimates are conservative to allow flexibility to adapt to the level of service necessary, and will be determined once the Program is in place.
- **Startup and Training Costs.** Preliminary costs associated with initiating a REACH Zone are assumed to include costs for staff training, swiftwater safety gear, and everyday safety gear. Startup costs also include a capital costs allowance, which may be used for costs related to initial recreational and educational programming materials, storage units, and space rentals.
- **Leveraging Existing Entities.** The Program will leverage existing entities that provide services, staff and resources for administrative support in order to reduce overall Program costs, as compared to creating a new standalone entity.





Table 6.1. First Year Start-Up and Initial Training Cost Estimate for Four (4) REACH Zones

PROGRAM COSTS	SWORN PEACE OFFICER RANGER			PROGRAM STAFF & CONTRACTED PARTNERS			RIVER STEWARDS	PER REACH ZONE
	Chief	Deputy Chief	Ranger**	Administrator*** (Communications, Finance, and Program Management)	Interpretation & Recreation Specialist	River Safety & Maintenance Specialist	Corps Member	
FTE for Program	1	1	12	1	4	8	24	
Additional Seasonal Staff (~6 months)					4	8		
Total FTE per Tier	1	1	12	1	6	12	24	
Loaded Cost/FTE	\$280,800	\$195,520	\$2,021,760	\$158,080	\$636,480	\$1,272,960	\$1,075,200	
Total Annual Personnel Cost	\$5,640,800							\$1,410,200
Total Annual Operating Expenses	\$900,200							\$225,050
Startup and Training Costs	\$1,321,600							\$330,400
<b>TOTAL PROGRAM COST (YEAR 1)*</b>	<b>\$7,862,600</b>							<b>\$1,965,650</b>

\* Annual Program cost is anticipated to decrease in subsequent years as start up and training costs decrease.

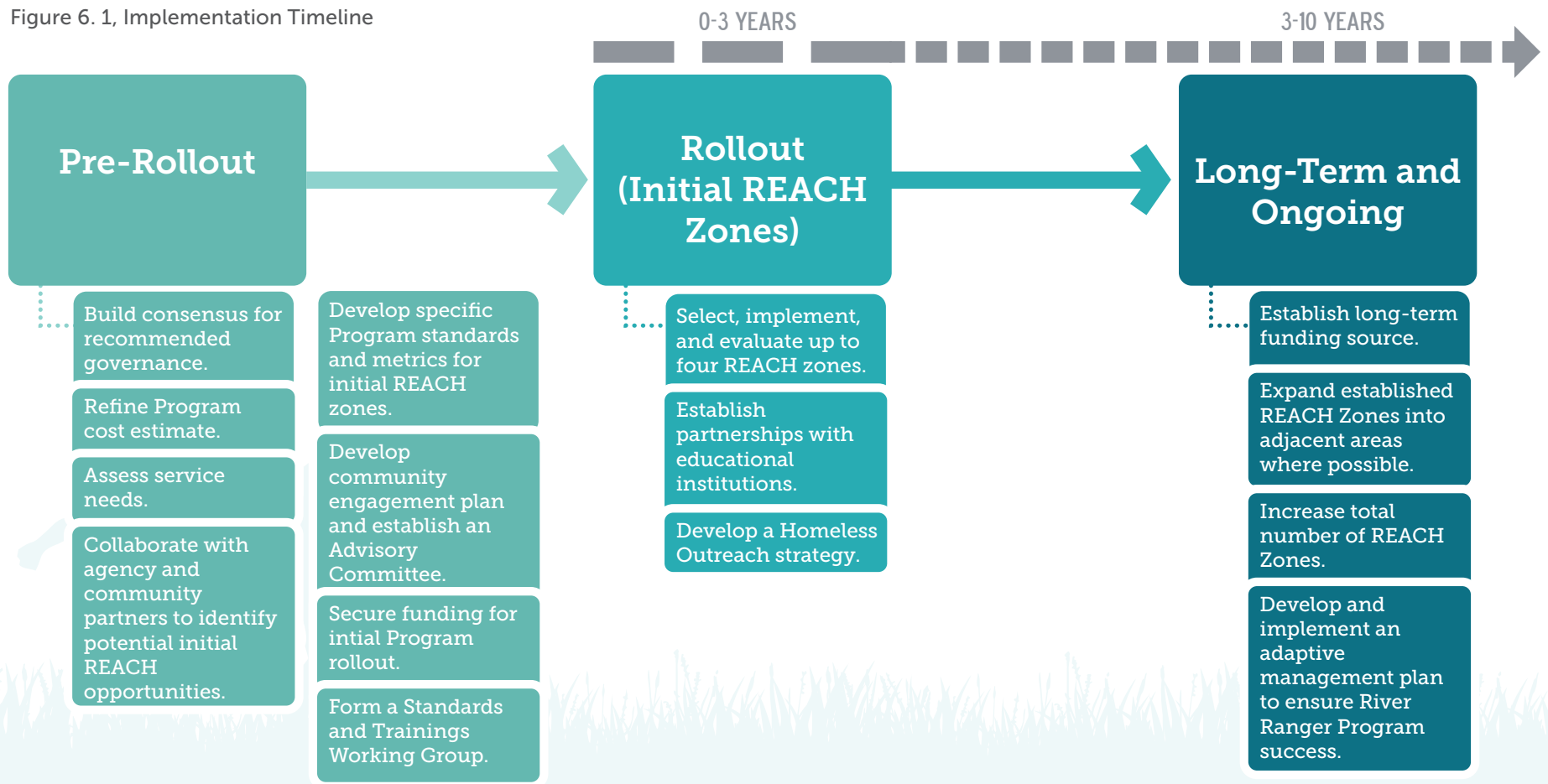
\*\* This position will have morning and evening shifts available to provide coverage throughout the day. Number of Rangers on the River can vary by season.

\*\*\* Supplements administrative staff of existing entity. More administrative staff would be needed if the River Ranger Program is implemented under a new entity.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The River Ranger Program presents a grand vision for creating an inviting and welcoming space, while offering a unique experience to embrace the natural resources offered by the Los Angeles River. This expansive vision can be achieved over time, but must begin with focused actions that will incrementally build support for the Program. The implementation strategy is summarized in Figure 6.1 and described in greater detail in subsequent pages.

Figure 6. 1, Implementation Timeline





## Pre-Rollout

- **Build consensus for preferred Governance Model.** Continue to meet with stakeholders to finalize the preferred governance structure and create an advisory group to provide additional support and guidance to the final managing entity. MRCA and WCA will continue to shepherd the process until the governance model is confirmed and implemented.
- **Refine Program cost estimate.** Assess current maintenance needs and costs by the existing maintenance providers in collaboration with LA County, the US Army Corps of Engineers, the City of Los Angeles, and other municipalities.
- **Assess service needs.** Compile existing information from various planning efforts and conduct additional mapping and analysis where needed to identify resource management and maintenance needs, and opportunities/needs for other services.
- **Collaborate with agency and community partners to identify potential initial REACH Zone opportunities.** Launching implementation efforts with entities that provide existing services will allow the governing authority to jumpstart the River Ranger Program and build on proven models of success. For instance, launching this effort with State and local Conservation Corps would support the resource management and maintenance needs in REACH Zones along the River, and collaborating with entities that have established river projects and educational programs could facilitate implementation.
- **Develop specific Program goals and metrics for initial REACH Zones.** REACH Zones must provide consistent baseline programming to meet the criteria described above and build a foundation for full River Ranger Program realization. However, each REACH Zone should be tailored to local conditions and define its proposed metrics in relation to programming and site-based community need.
- **Develop a community engagement plan and establish an Advisory Committee.** The Advisory Committee shall provide guidance on Program development, including outreach, education and engagement programs. It may be similar to the Lower Los Angeles River Revitalization Plan's Implementation Advisory Group, and should include community members as well as NGOs and/or CBO representatives to ensure their continued engagement throughout River Ranger Program implementation.
- **Secure funding for initial Program rollout.** Once a governance model is identified, the governing authority(ies) should reach out to relevant partners who have the capacity to provide funds already directed towards river maintenance or recreation related activities, including USACE, LACFD, and LADWP.
- **Form a Standards and Trainings Working Group.** A working group comprised of professional representatives from park management and education, law enforcement, community engagement, the Los Angeles Community College District and supervisory personnel from the MRCA and WCA should be established. Initial tasks for the Working Group should include:
  - » Complete an assessment of required River Ranger Program staffing levels.
  - » Review and finalize the minimum standards and training requirements recommended in Chapter 4.
  - » Assess the need for Sworn Peace Officer Ranger presence in communities.
  - » Align relevant River Stewards training and educational experiences with college course requirements so River Stewards participants could apply for college credit in the future.



### Program Rollout (Initial REACH Zones; years 0-3)

- **Select, implement, and evaluate up to four REACH Zones.** At least one REACH Zone should be located along the lower River and one along the upper River. Each REACH Zone should be evaluated every three to six months based on key metrics identified in the pre-rollout, and the results compared to build a portfolio of River Ranger Program component models that can be applied to other Zones. Locations suggested during stakeholder meetings will be included in the selection process.
- **Establish partnerships with educational institutions.** The River Ranger Program should partner with schools early on to test curriculum integration and identify best practices for maximizing collaborative learning in environmental education and stewardship. Schools in close proximity to the River may be ideal candidates, though selection should not overlook other schools based on distance. Partnerships could build upon existing relationships between schools and non-profit organizations fostered through the Watershed Education Plan, a component of the Lower Los Angeles River Revitalization Plan.
- **Develop a Homeless Outreach Strategy.** It is recommended that the managing entity coordinate with LAHSA, the City of Long Beach HSD and other relevant agencies to develop a common strategy to coordinate homeless efforts along the River. Such a strategy may reduce political and geographic coordination challenges, address potentially conflicting policies regarding outreach procedures, and facilitate new perspectives on how to engage safely and sympathetically.



### Long-Term and Ongoing (3-10 Years)

- **Establish long-term funding source.** The governing authority should secure sustainable funding source(s) within the first five years of Program rollout to support River Ranger Program expansion and evolution.
- **Expand established REACH Zones into adjacent areas where possible.** Following the evaluation of the existing REACH Zones, programming should be extended where possible to facilitate the long-term goal of establishing a unified presence along the length of the River.
- **Increase total number of REACH Zones.** New REACH Zones should continue to be established in response to needs and partnership opportunities. River Ranger Program benefits may be amplified if REACH Zones are aligned with proposed projects associated with river revitalization efforts.
- **Develop and implement an adaptive management plan to ensure River Ranger Program success.** As the Program expands, it should be able to adapt with the dynamic environmental, social, and economic landscape in Los Angeles County. An active adaptive management plan would encourage evaluation of the Program to ensure it continues to meet established goals, and is able to evolve to address new challenges and opportunities. The adaptive management plan should involve an iterative decision-making process, assessing Program design, management, and metrics.



## CONCLUSION

A dependable presence along the River and its tributaries serves to strengthen the revitalization already taking place along the River. With maintenance, accessibility, diversity, and the community at its heart, the River Ranger Program will help redefine the LA River as a safe and inviting community and environmental resource.

The River Ranger Program Establishment Plan provides the framework and tools to facilitate the refinement and implementation of the Program, which will require immediate and ongoing collaboration with both community and agency partners. The establishment of each REACH Zone will foster River appreciation, the benefits rippling out into surrounding communities and complementing other revitalization efforts. As the River Ranger Program gains visibility and extends its service area, the perception of the LA River as a community and environmental asset will grow. Furthermore, the River Ranger Program can emerge as a new model for both multi-jurisdictional collaboration and community-based revitalization.





