

**LOS ANGELES & SAN GABRIEL RIVERS WATERSHED COUNCIL**  
**700 N. ALAMEDA STREET LOS ANGELES, CA 90012**  
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**www.lasgrwc.org**

<b>NEXT MEETING: June 16, 9:30AM-Noon at County Public Works</b> <b>AGENDA: Watershed Work with School Kids: Think River! &amp; The River Project</b>
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**MINUTES: STAKEHOLDERS MEETING, May 19, 2004**

We are now able to distribute these minutes by e-mail within two weeks of the meeting. Those people on our e-mail list will also receive a draft agenda about a week ahead of time. You may register to be included on our e-mail list-serve through <[rumi@lasgrwc.org](mailto:rumi@lasgrwc.org)>.

**Arthur Golding** chaired the meeting and read the Mission statement.

**Greetings, introductions were made all around. The April 21<sup>st</sup> minutes were approved.**

**Executive Director's Report – Rick Harter**

Rick expressed our appreciations to MWD for providing the luxurious settings for our stakeholders meeting and to MWD's staff for supporting our audio-visual needs.

DOC Watershed Coordinator Grant – We have a signed contract in place, have gone through a selection process, and made an offer to Drew Ready; we expect him to start work next Monday, May 24<sup>th</sup>. Drew is a native of the San Gabriel Valley, who has been working on native plant programs for the last six years at Cal State University Monterey Bay, where he got his degree and worked in their Watershed Institute on the 'Return of the Natives' Restoration Education Project; see <[watershed.csumb.edu](http://watershed.csumb.edu)>. The Landscape Ethic Committee will be meeting with him on Thursday, May 27<sup>th</sup> to discuss Work Plan priorities. We are looking forward to introducing him at the next meeting.

WRP Small Grants – We have gone through the selection process, but results are not official yet. We had a large number of applicants from Los Angeles County; only two projects per county will be selected.

City of LA Environmental Affairs Department (EAD) – A few days ago at LA City budget hearings the EAD was endorsed as continuing, Rick reported. It has even been suggested that the EAD expand its purview.

Los Angeles River Habitat & Biological Monitoring Conference, May 26<sup>th</sup> – Sponsored by City of LA's Watershed Protection Division at USC, Davidson Conference Center. This conference is Part I of LA River focused events. For more info, visit <[www.lariverhabitat.com](http://www.lariverhabitat.com)>.

June 10<sup>th</sup> Arundo Project Tour – The tour will be led by Bill Neill, Rick announced. Refer to our Calendar section on the web for more details.

UCLA Extension's Smart Grown Conference, June 3<sup>rd</sup> – This is another event relevant to our work, which will be held at the Wilshire Grand. More info is available at <[www.UCLAExtension.edu/SmartGrowth](http://www.UCLAExtension.edu/SmartGrowth)>.

Sabrina Drill took the opportunity to announce UCCE's Invasive Plant workshop to be held June 8-9<sup>th</sup>. Refer to our Calendar section on the web for details.

**County DPW Watershed Division Update – Dan Lafferty reported on their activities:**

- They have received a \$220,000 grant from the DWR for their Sun Valley project to construct monitoring wells.
- A portion of the Sun Valley Park project is currently out for bid. Bid opening is May 25<sup>th</sup> and construction is expected to begin in August.

- Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) has awarded DPW-WMD \$56,000 for signs on the Lower LA River.
- They are in contract negotiations with consultants for the Dominguez Gap Wetlands project. This project is a joint venture between the County and City of Long Beach providing a three-mile stretch of wetlands along the LA River, including Dominguez Gap Spreading Grounds and DeForest Park. Work is expected to begin in early July.
- San Gabriel River Master Plan and EIR update follows under the Workshop section.
- To address and comply with the NPDES permits, TMDL process, and AB 885 (state bill to develop new guidelines and requirements for septic tanks) in the North Santa Monica Bay watershed, and produce an overall implementation plan to include specific projects, programs, and administrative changes necessary to deal with these legislative requirements in an efficient way, the County has been leading a broad stakeholder-driven process and created a Task Force in the North Santa Monica Bay watersheds. Stakeholders represent a number of organizations, environmental groups, regulators, regulated communities, homeowners' groups, and government agencies. A kick-off meeting was held about three weeks ago, which was very well attended, including Cal EPA's Secretary Terry Tamminen and Supervisor Yaroslavsky. There is a lot of optimism that this process could be used as a template in other areas trying to deal with the multitude of water quality issues.

The group's structure will include an Executive Committee made up of decision-making levels within the different organizations and entities involved and several sub-committees underneath: Advisory/Implementation Sub-Committee, which function is to create the Plan and brainstorm the practical aspects of addressing and complying with the above mentioned pieces of legislations; Monitoring Sub-Committee will be producing Monitoring and Effectiveness Monitoring Plans and filling in the unknowns of the fairly natural systems; and Funding Sub-Committee will be dealing with funding strategies. It has been acknowledged the need for cross talk among the Sub-Committees as well as the Executive Committee.

- The County is also involved in a joint project with Ventura County and the USACE in studying the Santa Clara River as a whole, a challenging endeavor considering the historic disconnect of the Upper from the Lower parts of the river. LA County's concern is flow quantity rather than water quality. There has been a controversy at the county line due to the fact that LA County has different design standards than Ventura County and there have been differences in how flood protection is provided.

**LA Regional Board Update** – Shirley Birosik reported on their activities:

- Shirley shared with us that a few years ago at a Regional Board workshop we were trying to define what a watershed plan is and what the components should be, and now we have watershed management plans that are almost complete or underway not only throughout LA County but also in Ventura County. She has been involved in most of the watersheds' tech committees and/or Task Force and sub-committee meetings.
- Shirley referred to a study by Martha Sutula of SCCWRP, presented at the Malibu Creek Watershed Advisory Council meeting on May 18<sup>th</sup>, which goal was to demonstrate that Malibu Lagoon is acting as a sink to nutrients during wet weather season. Shirley referred to a possible connection of the study's findings to using wetlands as treatment systems at the lower part of watersheds and pointed that they may not be functioning unless there are such treatment systems in the upper portions of the watershed. The study is scheduled to be completed in August and most likely will be available on SCCWRP's web site.
- San Gabriel River Watershed-wide Monitoring Plan – an effort of LA County Sanitation Districts as part of permit requirements. Shirley acknowledged that such a plan is a very important tool, since besides stormwater monitoring, compliance monitoring for NPDES dischargers and/or volunteer monitoring, not necessarily tight together, there has not been an organized monitoring program. The State Board has a Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP), which looks at each watershed only once in five years.

Shirley suggested that it would be nice to see coordination of monitoring efforts throughout the LA River watershed.

- There is not enough water quality data available for the Los Angeles River, Shirley acknowledged. She has been participating in a committee looking at LA River flow issues, as well as water quality monitoring. The group's findings reveal that good water quality data exist only near treatment plants, leaving large portions of the river with no data.

Rick made a comment that the Watershed Council is involved in the San Gabriel River Watershed-wide Monitoring Plan, and that we will be hearing from all of the sub-watershed management plan leaders as soon as their management plans are completed or nearly so.

**LA River Ad Hoc Committee** – Lupe Vela reported on their activities:

- Their next meeting will be held on June 21<sup>st</sup>, and it will focus on funding received to develop the LA River Revitalization Plan. Proposed Request for Qualifications for developing the plan will also be part of the discussion.
- LA River Appreciation Day, May 13<sup>th</sup> –There was a celebration and an award ceremony, Lupe reported. Scott Wilson received the Community Group award, Dorothy Green was honored with the Community Leader award, Clark Robins was honored for his work on saving and preserving historic bridges, the Village Gardens was honored for their work in the valley, and Melanie Winter was honored for the poetry events she has organized in the valley.
- They are co-sponsoring a public presentation on May 25<sup>th</sup> by Civitas, a Denver-based Urban Design and Architecture firm involved in the Platte River Master Plan, on their nation-wide river front work.
- The Environmental Quality Management Committee of the LA City Council has approved a watershed motion to be voted on by the City Council requesting a preliminary report from the Bureau of Sanitation on what it would take to produce a Watershed Plan for the city and the county, focusing preliminary on the LA River and including Ballona and Compton creeks.
- The USACE is cooperatively working with the County and the City to do a hydrology study on the LA River from Canoga Park to Rio Hondo, and the Bureau of Engineers has designated a hydrology engineer to work closely with the Corps. The study is expected to be completed by April 2005.

**Workshops:**

**San Gabriel River Master Plan (SGRMP)** – Rick introduced Rama Tallamraju, LACDPW, who explained that the SGRMP focuses on the San Gabriel River (SGR) corridor and it has been a stakeholder-driven consensus process. She described the San Gabriel River watershed as 640 square miles of drainage area encompassing mountain, valley, and coastal plane regions. The San Gabriel River has four tributaries: Upper San Gabriel River, Walnut Creek, San Jose Creek, and Coyote Creek. There are 19 cities along the river corridor and they all have participated in the planning process. The planning team included Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC), the National Park Service (NPS), and LA County's Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Regional Planning Departments.

During the planning process, stakeholders were given a chance to share their visions either through group meetings or individual interviews.

The SGRMP vision and goals were to: preserve and enhance habitat systems through public education, connectivity, and balance with other uses; enhance and protect open space systems through conservation, aesthetics, connectivity, stewardship, and multi-purpose uses; encourage and enhance safe and diverse recreation systems, while providing for expansion, equitable and sufficient access, balance, and multi-purpose uses; maintain flood protection and existing water and other rights while enhancing flood management activities through the integration with recreation, open space, and habitat systems; and maintain existing water and other rights while

enhancing water quality, water supply, groundwater recharge, and water conservation through the integration with recreation, open space, and habitat systems.

The SGRMP includes 134 corridor projects, connections to adjacent projects, five concept design studies, a funding strategy, design guidelines and standards, and an environmental impact report organized in five chapters.

Chapter I outlines the SGR watershed setting, past versus present thinking about the river, history of the planning process, and organization of the plan. The SGR changes through time are described in Chapter II. Chapter III depicts the plan framework, future vision, plan elements, Master Plan projects, program, plans, policy recommendations, and concept design studies. There are five concept design studies (San Gabriel Canyon Spreading Grounds, Woodland Duck Farm, San Gabriel River Discovery Center, Lario Creek Habitat Restoration, and El Dorado Regional Park River Restoration), which include a conceptual design plan, preliminary cost estimates, possible funding sources, and graphic illustration layouts.

Future development opportunities and potential projects are discussed in Chapter IV. Chapter V focuses on the roles of the planning team members, financial strategies and funding overview, Environmental Impact Report (EIR) summary, implementation timeline, and sustaining long-term vision.

The next step would be transitioning from Master Plan development to implementation. The Master Plan is designed to function as a living document, changing over time.

The EIR and Draft Plan are scheduled to be released for public comment in June. Currently, the Draft report can be accessed at <[www.ladpw.org/pln/sgrmp](http://www.ladpw.org/pln/sgrmp)>, and it will also be available on CD with printing instructions. The Master Plan is expected to be completed by September.

Rama accompanied her presentation with an array of photographs of the planning process, as well as the San Gabriel River watershed including dams and reservoirs, spreading grounds, gravel pits, bike trails, etc.

Stakeholders raised questions about the relation between the SGRMP and the Upper San Gabriel River planning process led by the San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy (SGMRC) and the LA River Master Plan, and also the relationship between the LA River Landscape Guidelines and the SGRMP and how they apply to the SGR. Rama addressed the questions by explaining that the SGRMP is focusing on the SGR corridor whereas the planning process led by the SGMRC encompasses the whole watershed north of the Whittier Narrows, and that they are looking for all projects to fit together. The SGRMP is a product of a diverse stakeholders-driven consensus process, which has brought to the table the water agency and the private industry due to the fact that a large portion of the SGR is soft bottom and suitable for percolation. There is a section in the SGRMP that talks about the plants that are known to be the same as those in the *LA River Landscaping Guidelines*, although there is not a specific document addressing landscaping guidelines yet. The County is planning to produce Landscaping Guidelines as well as Maintenance Guidelines and Signage Guidelines for the SGR after the SGRMP is finalized.

Another question was raised referring to the SGRMP in the Angeles National Forest. Rama explained that the Master Plan only covers the dams and the reservoirs due to limitations in their jurisdictional authority.

**Angeles National Forest Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)** – Rick introduced Jerry Sirsky, Angeles National Forest (ANF) Forest Plan Representative, who explained that a DEIS has been prepared for the revision of the four Land Management Plans for the Southern California National Forests (Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres, and San Bernardino). The Draft Revised Land Management Plans are based on the ‘preferred alternative(s)’ identified for each of the Forests. Jerry’s presentation focused on the Angeles National Forest.

The development of the Revised Land Management Plan and the DEIS are required in order to satisfy the regulatory requirements (revision required every 10-15 years or ordered by the Forest Supervisor when the conditions or demands in the area covered by the plan have changed significantly) and to address the health, diversity, and productivity of the forest necessary to meet the needs of the present and future generations. The plan defines the management direction for the forest based on desired conditions and objectives, land use zoning, and design standards.

Based on comments received at public meetings held following the Notice of Intent to revise the ANF Land Management Plan, the following issues of concern were identified: public use of the National Forest is affected by intensive competition among an increased number of people and growing population and expanding urban development as well as increased demand for forest products are increasing pressure on forest resources.

There are six alternatives proposed with eight land use zones (Urban & Rural Interface, Developed Area Intermix, Backcountry Motorized, Backcountry Non-Motorized, Critical Biological, Existing Wilderness, Recommended Wilderness, and Experimental Forest) used in different combinations for each of the alternatives.

Alternative 1 requires no action and reflects the current management activities and management direction found in the existing land management plan: providing a mix of recreational opportunities while maintaining biological diversity and ecological integrity.

Alternative 2 proposes maintaining biological diversity and ecological integrity while providing a gradual increase in recreational opportunities. Land use zones are similar to Alternative 1, with the addition of some special area designations.

Alternative 3 has an increased emphasis on maintaining and protecting biological diversity and ecological integrity and maximizing 'special area' designations. Recreation and other uses are continued but at a lower level and with increased controls. There is more area added in the recommended wilderness and backcountry non-motorized land use zones.

Alternative 4 (preferred alternative for the Angeles National Forest) primary theme is an increased emphasis on recreation. with intensive levels of management controls and a focused emphasis on offsetting effects to the biological diversity and ecological integrity of the forest. A wide range of recreational opportunities is considered. The management of natural resources at a sustainable level including proactive management for biodiversity through surveys and implementation of federally listed species recovery plans is reflected on. This alternative was preferred because it gives management the flexibility to respond to the variety and level of recreation expected from a growing urban and culturally diverse population.

Alternative 5 proposes a large increase of acres in the backcountry motorized land use zones and no acres in the recommended wilderness.

Alternative 6 provides increase protection and restoration of all forest resources, and mitigation of existing impacts from all uses. Sierra Club is interested in this alternative.

The preferred alternative (Alternative 4) represents Forest Service position for the 90-day DEIS comment period (May 14-August 11) and it is not a decision. After public comments are received and analyzed, the selected alternative will be identified in the Final Environmental Impact Statement scheduled to be completed in May 2005.

Comments can be sent electronically via Forest Service's interactive document on the web at <[www.fs.fed.us/r5/scfpr](http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/scfpr)>. Open houses will be held in different communities where the public will be provided with information as to what is in the draft documents and given the opportunity to visit with the planning team and Forest staff. For dates and locations call 866-252-8846 or go to <[www.fs.fed.us/r5/scfpr/draft/openhouse](http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/scfpr/draft/openhouse)>. In the LA Basin, there's one in Glendora on Thursday evening, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, and one in Pasadena on Saturday mid-day, June 5<sup>th</sup>.

Questions were raised whether fire suppression measures differ from non-urban to urban areas, and whether the Regional Board is involved in the process. Jerry explained that the fire suppression measures are different for urban and non-urban areas. He did not have information whether the Regional Board is involved, but the USFS process is about land use management.

Rick invited Rama and Jerry to re-visit when both draft plans get released to give us an update and present all pertinent documents and maps, which were not available in time for the stakeholders meeting.

Thank you all for your participation.

**PRESENT: (signed in)**

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**LOS ANGELES & SAN GABRIEL  
WATERSHED COUNCIL**

**700 N. Alameda Street  
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**NEXT STAKEHOLDER MEETING:**

**June 16, 2003, 9:30 AM to 12:00 PM**

**L.A. County Public Works**

**900 S. Fremont Ave, Alhambra, CA 91803**

**AGENDA: Watershed Work with School Kids: Think River! & The River Project**