

DATE: January 28, 2010
TO: WCA Governing Board
FROM: Belinda V. Faustinos, Executive Officer
SUBJECT: Item 7: Liaison & Activities Report

San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority (Authority): Public comments have been received on both the draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) and the Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA). Staff and supporting consultants have completed the responses to comments received from the public and agencies on the DEIR. The Final EIR has been prepared for consideration by the lead agency, the San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority Board (Authority) at a special meeting on January 20, 2010. The discretionary action the Authority will consider for the Final EIR will include the lease and sublease for the project area. The project continues to be staffed part-time by the Administrative Assistant. All other support is provided via contributed staff time of Authority members. Three consultants are funded to continue critical services, EDAW and Sohagi Law Group for the environmental work and Alma Martinez Assoc. for the lease/sublease agreements.

Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority (LCWA): Activities regarding acquisition of the Hellman 100 acres site in Seal Beach are continuing. LCWA completed the updated appraisal report for the Hellman Properties and received approval of the appraisal report from the Department of General Services on February 2009. The Purchase and Sale Agreement and Pollution Legal Liability are being finalized and the documents to purchase the property are ready pending WCB release of acquisition funds. LCWA is also actively applying for various other acquisition funds, in case WCB funds are unavailable.

In September 2009 the Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewards in cooperation with LCWA launched the 2009-2010 Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewardship Program as funded by the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project Community Wetland Restoration Grant Program. The official start of this stewardship work began on September 19th with the 4th Annual Zedler Marsh Clean-up and the stewardship program has already collected over half-ton of trash in only six months.

LCWA is currently working with its partners, El Dorado Audubon, Aquarium of the Pacific, Save Our Beach and Los Cerritos Wetlands Stewards to implement the Stewardship Program beyond the SCWRP grant. Additionally the LCWA is currently working with US Fish and Wildlife Services and Eric Zahn to acquire funding for developing a program to restore Zelder Marsh.

Los Angeles & San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council (Watershed Council): The Watershed Council continues to provide a wide range of watershed improvement services including implementation of a major water augmentation and water quality demonstration project in the City of Los Angeles, they now have 12 employees funded through a variety of sources working in native landscaping, Compton Creek watershed, water quality testing, watershed coordination, etc. in the watershed. A key

focus for this year is improvement to the communications and fiscal elements of the Watershed Council strategic plan.

Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Plan: The Department of Water Resources recently identified the Gateway Region as an eligible entity for IRWM funding. This will have an impact on the activities of the Greater LA Region in the Gateway area and there will be a evaluation of alternatives at the next Leadership Committee meeting. The release of grant guidelines for this program continues to be delayed primarily due to the state bond freeze. The RMC and WCA continue to be very involved in the efforts of this region related to Disadvantaged Communities (DAC).

National Park Service (NPS) San Gabriel River Watershed Special Resource Study (San Gabriel SRS). The next steps for the NPS staff on this special resource study are as follows: 1. To complete a draft report. The draft report is expected to be completed for review in fall of 2010; 2. After stakeholder review of the report, a final report will be completed form presentation to Congress in fall 2011. More information is available at <http://www.nps.gov/pwro/sangabriel>.

Upper Santa Clara River: The RMC Board approved funding for acquisition of several parcels located within the Soledad Canyon Capp Acquisition project and is currently awaiting direction from Sacramento to restart the RMC grant and acquire the property. Once state bond funds are released the grant agreement will be authorized and acquisition can take place within 3-5 months pending appraisal report is approved by DGS. Soledad Canyon Capp Acquisition project has formed the Santa Clarita Valley Conservation Alliance (SCVCA), which meets quarterly to discuss acquisitions within the CAPP. Currently the SCVCA is working on the several acquisitions, but are pending due to the State Budget.

Conservation efforts in the upper Santa Clara River Watershed continue. A plan for implementation of the Conceptual Area Protection Plan has been finalized. Discussions are ongoing between biodiversity working group partners, the City of Santa Clarita and the consultants working on the project regarding acquisition opportunities. The One Valley One Vision Plan (OVOV), a joint effort between the County of Los Angeles, the City of Santa Clarita and Valley residents and businesses to create a single vision and guidelines for the future growth of the Valley and the preservation of natural resources in the upper Santa Clara River Watershed will seek to create a green belt along the upper Santa Clara River to the east of the city. City residents recently approved an assessment district aimed at providing funds for preservation of a green belt as outlined in OVOV. The City hopes to leverage the assessment district funds to maximize the funds available for acquisitions. The City of Santa Clarita is currently working to secure enactment of H.R. 5887, the Soledad Canyon Mine Act that provides for a resolution that would transfer of mining rights, currently held by CEMEX, a mining company, to a location close to Victorville, California. H.R 5887 creates a mechanism for the Secretary of the Interior to cancel the two contracts for sand and gravel mining that CEMEX presently has with the Bureau of Land Management.

The South Coast Wildlands Project (SCWP) received a grant from the Resources Legacy Foundation to provide start-up costs for a non-profit land trust in the upper watershed that will engage with the local communities of Agua Dulce and Acton and,

in coordination with the biodiversity working group, will focus on and continue conservation efforts and partnerships in the upper Santa Clara River watershed. SCWP recently published a report highlighting the upper Santa Clara River watershed area as a significant wildlife linkage in the network of linkages for the South Coast Ecoregion. The report, South Coast Missing Linkages: A Wildland Network for the South Coast Ecoregion is available on line at <http://www.scwildlands.org>.

The Upper Santa Clara River IRWMP: Meets quarterly and seeks a balanced approach to managing the water resources that are reflective of the region's interests. The overall general will of the public, elected representatives, and government, is to manage the watershed in a responsible manner that balances growth, economics, and natural resources. The Upper SCR IRWMP stakeholder group is one venue where all sides on these issues can work together to define common goals and objectives in the watershed and prioritize implementation programs to reach those goals/objectives and within those parameters, all input from parties with diverse views regarding growth are welcomed. The Upper SCR IRWMP submitted their Regional Acceptance Process (RAP) and was approved by the Department of Water Resources. Currently Upper SCR IRWMP is developing a program to prioritize funding and developing final guidelines for Prop 84 grants. Although DWR is currently working on an IRWM Plan standard update and long term plans for the IRWM program. There is currently no authorization for providing bond funding so the timing of the funding projects is unknown.

Green Visions: Phase I and Phase II are complete. Phase III funded through RMC funds was stopped on December 2008 due to the state bond freeze and therefore the RMC and WCA Board approved budget augmentation on December 2008 was not authorized and is awaiting for an Amended Grant Agreement. Although the project resumed work on May 2009 due to non-state matching funds from LA County DPW and is scheduled to complete work on December 2009. The project includes Habitat Tool Development, Development Watershed Modeling, Testing Habitat Tool Development, Revision of Data Layers, Testing Watershed Modeling and Web Tool Enhancements.

Duck Farm Project: Phase 1A project development activity has resumed with limited bond funds approved for this purpose. The survey of the entire site and soils work on the Phase 1A portion are complete. The project consultant, EDAW, has presented very exciting conceptual plans for this phase which integrates the presence of the power lines through the property with educational and interpretive features about energy conservation and alternatives. Supplemental Environmental Project funding from the USEPA is providing ongoing work on phytoremediation (use of plants to remediate soil contaminants) of ~16.8 acres at the Duck Farm.

An grant application was submitted on November 12, 2009 Natural Resources Agency under the CalTrans Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program, 2009-2010 Cycle in the amount of \$446,496.00 for components of the Duck Farm Phase 1A implementation. Preliminary approvals are anticipated in Spring, 2010.

The MRCA Rangers continue surveillance of the site mainly for security purposes, with reduced hours due to WCA cash flow limitations.

The Los Angeles Conservation Corps (LACC) plans to utilize garage building on the northwest portion of the Duck Farm in accordance with their Memorandum of Understanding with the WCA, beginning in February 2010. In trade for this use, the LACC provide services by removing trash and debris that accumulates in/around the tunnel. They also remove graffiti and invasive weeds. In the interim, Coiner Nursery has entered into a short-term lease for use of the garage, in agreement with LACC and the WCA. This arrangement provides presence on the north end of the site, enhancing security.

At the direction of the WCA Board, the equestrian center operator has been vacated. At its June meeting, the WCA Board approved the estimated timeline of 6-12 months for evaluation and formation of a plan to resume the Duck Farm equestrian operations. This effort will include formation of a focused advisory panel comprised of qualified individuals familiar with public equestrian operations to provide guidance. From this information, the WCA will evaluate potential configurations for fiscally viable long term operations and circulate a request for qualifications, then a request for proposals. A report will be provided once Staff has resources to move forward with this effort.

In the interim, the premises and the house will undergo health and safety modifications. The house and premises were intended to be under the care of two MRCA employees, under lease agreements which would provide tenancy in exchange for care and surveillance services. However, this arrangement was not successful after two months. At this time, staff has the health and safety repairs underway by the WCA structure and maintenance contractor, Positive Plumbing. As soon as the repairs are complete, staff will proceed with placing a renter in the house. Rental is anticipated in February 2010.

Mujeres de la Tierra approached the WCA to provide limited outreach services for the Duck Farm, utilizing funding from an independent source. Over a three month period between April and June 2009, Mujeres prepared a Fact Sheet, logo for use on outreach materials and buttons, and a survey. The survey targeted residents living on streets immediately adjacent to the Duck Farm property on the east side near the entry point off San Fidel and Ramada Avenues in La Puente, users at San Angelo Park and Bassett Park during several LA County Department of Parks and Recreation events, and a mobile home park west of the Duck Farm, directly across the San Gabriel River off Elliot Street in El Monte. The survey data Mujeres gathered, along with the fact sheet, photographs, the door hanger and the survey used in the process are available with a request to staff.

Azusa River Wilderness Park Project: WCA staff is continuing to work on implementing project priorities. A boundary survey of the Canyon Inn Property has been ordered, demolition of the mobile home park is scheduled for later this month, and a grant was recently submitted to the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to upgrade the filtration system for the community water system at the Wilderness Park. The WCA Board approved the final Azusa River Wilderness Park master plan. Staff will proceed with issuing a RFP to prepare construction documents for Phase I of the plan development.

Walnut Creek Habitat & Open Space: Walnut Creek Open Space was acquired in October 2008 and the process of initiating planning for the site was stopped due to the state bond freeze. Currently Walnut Creek Open Space does not have revenues; therefore, until the planning process is completed and uses of the land are better defined, the property will remain closed to the public.

The California Conservation Corps has completed two additional days of weed removal and brush cutting.

Emerald Necklace: The Emerald Necklace is a vision for a 17 mile loop of parks and greenways connecting 10 cities and nearly 500,000 residents along the Río Hondo and San Gabriel Rivers. Since its inception, a number of stakeholders have developed numerous projects and activities that help accomplish this vision. In order to better coordinate and facilitate both projects and activities along the Emerald Necklace, staff participates in monthly coordinating meetings with Supervisor District 1 staff and other stakeholders. A purpose of these meetings is to discuss the current status of on-going projects and coordinate the prioritization of projects along the Emerald Necklace for recreational and habitat enhancement purposes. A recent accomplishment was adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding between Amigos de Los Rios, County Parks and Public Works regarding a process to effectively handle processing of project implementation permits.

Whittier Narrows Plan Update: The Whittier Narrows Plan Update is in its first draft with the partners reviewing and commenting. The next steps will be for input from the partners to be incorporated, then the draft taken to the Stakeholder Committee for review and comments. Once these have been incorporated the final draft will be prepared for public review and comments. The CEQA compliance documentation is underway by BonTerra.

Compton Creek Watershed Activities: RMC Staff continue to participate in the Compton Creek Task Force and coordinate efforts with the County of Los Angeles Office of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas (2nd District) on the Master Compton Creek Ecosystem Restoration and Implementation Plan.

San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments Energy, Environment and Natural Resources Committee (EENR Committee): The EENR Committee meets on a monthly basis and staff participates as a non-voting member. The voting members are Mary Ann Lutz, Chair (Monrovia), Denis Bertone, Vice-Chair (San Dimas) and Sam Pedroza, Member (Claremont). There are five working groups for the EENR Committee: Air, Energy, Open Space, Solid Waste and Water. An agency representative also participates in the monthly Water working group meetings.

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