LOS ANGELES RIVER
COOPERATION COMMITTEE

MEETING SUMMARY

October 3, 2016

LA County Department of Public Works, Conference Room A
900 S. Fremont Avenue, Alhambra, CA 91803

Committee Attendees

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Agency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gary Hildebrand</td>
<td>Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LACFCD)</td>
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<td>Kendrick Okuda</td>
<td>City of Los Angeles, Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering (BOE)</td>
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<td>David Van Dorpe</td>
<td>United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Los Angeles District</td>
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<td>Kecia Washington</td>
<td>City of Los Angeles, Department of Water and Power (LADWP)</td>
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<td>Wing Tam</td>
<td>City of Los Angeles, Department of Public Works, Bureau of Sanitation (LASAN)</td>
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<td>Cathie Santo Domingo</td>
<td>City of Los Angeles, Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP)</td>
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<td>Terri Grant</td>
<td>Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LACFCD)</td>
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<td>Keith Lilley</td>
<td>Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LACFCD)</td>
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<td>Sree Kumar</td>
<td>Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LACFCD)</td>
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Welcome and Introductions

Gary Hildebrand, Deputy Director of the Los Angeles County Flood Control District, welcomed the members of the committee and attendees.

Approval of July 11, 2016 Meeting Summary

Meeting Summary approved.

Items for the Committee’s Consideration and Recommendation

Rio Vistas Project – River LA

Jennifer Samson (Director of Real Estate Development, River LA) presented the Rio Vistas Project.

Ms. Samson provided background on the improvement project, which aims to convert 27 street ends in the Elysian Valley within public rights-of-way into environmental, recreational, and aesthetic benefits for the local community by creating community access points along the LA River. The project will use a human-centered design approach in partnership with students from LA River High School. Students investigated existing conditions and hosted design charrettes with the community before submitting designs for River LA’s consideration. Project goals include improving public access and enjoyment of the river, improving safe routes and recreation, enhancing water quality, clean streets, and river habitat, and encouraging community stewardship.

River LA has secured $1M in funding for the design, permitting, construction and three years of operation and maintenance of the project. So far, three street ends (Coolidge Street, Clearwater Street, and Newell Street) have been designed. River LA is in the process of obtaining City B-Permits to construct. Project completion is anticipated in 2017.

Questions and Comments:

- David Van Dorpe asked who will take over maintenance after the first three years.
  - Ms. Samson responded that they are in the process of developing a long-term maintenance plan and would like to work with the City, community groups, and local business owners to determine how best to maintain the sites after the first three years.
- Sree Kumar asked who maintains the river at the access points and whether ADA access was considered.
Ms. Samson responded that maintenance responsibilities are currently being examined by the project team. The team would like to include ADA access where possible.

- David Van Dorpe requested exploration of whether access points can be widened to allow entree for maintenance and emergency vehicles at a higher frequency along the river.
  - Ms. Samson responded that the possibility of including vehicular access is dependent on the conditions at each site, but is being considered wherever possible.
- David Van Dorpe reminded the project team that USACE permits will be necessary for construction along USACE right-of-way.
- Kecia Washington asked for more information on local businesses involvement and how the project will impact economic development.
  - Ms. Samson responded that the project team is exploring the possibility of partnering with local businesses through micro grants and programming to increase visitation of both the businesses and project sites.
- Kecia Washington asked if there is a Neighborhood Council and Business Improvement District in the region.
  - Ms. Samson responded that there is a Neighborhood Council but is not sure whether a Business Improvement District exists.
- Gary Hildebrand thanked River LA and commented that this project will be a great enhancement to the LA River bikeway system.

Committee Action: **Recommended**

**Project Evaluation Form – Los Angeles Department of Water and Power**

Evelyn Cortez-Davis (Manager of Water Recycling Policy and Water Rights, LADWP) presented the final revised Project Evaluation Form on behalf of the Water Focus Group (WFG).

Ms. Cortez-Davis provided background on the motivation for updating the form. In July 2016, Ms. Cortez-Davis provided the committee with background on the WFG which was formed at the request of the committee to better inform decisions as they pertain to water supply and water use. The first task of the WFG was to make revisions and improvements to the Project Evaluation Form. The process of revising the form included an update to the committee in July, feedback from the various agencies represented on the committee, and review and feedback from the LARCC Staff Focus Group.

LADWP coordinated with the Water Focus Group to increase the number of questions from 22 to a total of 35 questions. The Project Evaluation Form revisions include questions regarding water supply, flood management, impacts to existing infrastructure, project beneficiaries, potential right-of-way issues, and local economic impacts. The revised form will be uploaded to the LARCC webpage for immediate use upon approval.

Questions and Comments:

- Gary Hildebrand thanked DWP and the WFG for their efforts in updating and improving the Project Evaluation Form.

Committee Action: **Approved**

**Items for the Committee’s Information**

**51-Mile Integrated Design Study - LA River Index – River LA:**

Jennifer Samson (Director of Real Estate Development, River LA) presented the first phase of the LA River Index, as part of the 51-Mile Integrated Design Study.

The LA River Index is a visual tool which aggregates and displays existing information from both within and outside the City to highlight opportunities for planning and design along the Los Angeles River. The index centralizes data, reports, and findings relevant to the river’s past, present, and future along the full 51-mile
The project team held over 100 meetings with the public and elected officials to gather information on the river. The team’s findings show that a minimum volume can flow through the river while still allowing for water recharge. The index evaluates the river’s potential across 9 dimensions: flood risk management, water recharge, water quality, greenhouse gases, ecology & habitat, open space & parks, public health & social equity, transportation, and programming. The index was launched in June 2016 and is currently available to the public at www.lariverindex.org.

Questions and Comments:

- Gary Hildebrand asked Ms. Samson to show in detail the kind of information presented in each category.
  - Ms. Samson presented the example of an obesity rate heat map in the open space category which could potentially help project proponents determine where open space is most needed.
- Wing Tam asked how often the index is expected to be updated.
  - Ms. Samson informed the committee that update frequency has not been determined. The project team is aiming for the index to be a dynamic tool and prefers that the database be updated often.
- Kecia Washington asked if River LA is keeping track of where people are clicking from and whether visitors have the ability to comment on the website.
  - Ms. Samson responded that visits to the site are being tracked on the back end in the hopes that the information will help shape the tool to be more useful to interested parties. Ms. Samson also mentioned that there is currently no comments section, but the feedback is noted.
- Gary Hildebrand thanked River LA for developing such a useful tool to help guide future projects.

**Los Angeles River Habitat Enhancement Study & Opportunities Assessment – The Nature Conservancy**

Jill Sourial (Urban Conservation Director, The Nature Conservancy) and Sophie Parker (Senior Scientist, The Nature Conservancy) presented the Los Angeles River Habitat Enhancement Study which set out to test the basic ecological principles in the Elysian Valley by identifying habitat enhancement requirements, opportunities, and constraints. Shona Ganguly (Government Affairs, The Nature Conservancy) was also present to answer questions.

Ms. Sourial provided background on the study and explained that the term "enhancement" is used so as not to imply that the study explores restoration of the river to its original state. Ms. Sourial indicated that the study has been similarly presented to the City of LA Green Streets Committee, USACE, and UCLA. In 2013, the Nature Conservancy conducted a preliminary assessment of areas of biodiversity to identify potential locations for habitat enhancement. The assessment revealed that the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers both show potential for habitat enhancement.

Ms. Parker provided further details on the study, which focused on a 2.5-mile portion of river from Griffith Park to Taylor Yard which overlaps with portions of the USACE study (specifically portions of Reaches 4, 5, and 6). Historic hydrology and ecological conditions were studied along with a one0-year biological study. The historic hydrology, from LADWP and stream gauges, shows an overall increase in volume and consistency of flow in the river, excluding large flood events. The study suggests that in-channel habitat opportunities could include both passive recruitment and active planting and seeding. Outside the channel, the study suggests additional trees and parkland adjacent to the river in locations such as Bowtie Parcel and Elysian Park. The study finds that more certainty is needed regarding future flow scenarios. Ms. Parker also appealed to all parties interested in the river to share the understanding that hydrology drives biology and enhancement measures can be complimentary to each other.

Ms. Sourial presented some items to consider including: consistency of flow scenarios and various agencies’ flow assumptions; possibility of incorporating current water conservation data into future flow scenarios and habitat restoration design; USACE constraints regarding flow volumes; implementing an
integrated watershed approach in which The Nature Conservancy can help inform maintenance guidelines, etc.

Ms. Sourial shared that The Nature Conservancy is looking into a pilot project to remove invasive plants and enhance habitat.

Questions and Comments:

- Wing Tam asked when the Conservancy expects various flow scenarios to be explored.
  - Ms. Sourial responded that they would want to overlap or work with other agency studies to conduct this exploration.
- David Van Dorpe mentioned that water budget is the first step in the USACE restoration study and he looks forward to working with The Nature Conservancy on this as they move forward. The USACE will look into volume constraints the following year.
- David Van Dorpe mentioned USACE efforts regarding non-native plant removal and long-term maintenance to keep them out.
- Gary Hildebrand commented that The Nature Conservancy brings up some great questions regarding collaboration and balance of conservation, capture, and habitat. Mr. Hildebrand requested that the Conservancy keep engaged with the various agencies to provide input on future projects and studies.
  - Ms. Sourial responds that there are potential opportunities for real-time data sharing and collaboration among agencies.
- Kecia Washington asked if the study focused on any one of the presented flow scenarios and if The Nature Conservancy makes any recommendations as a result of the study.
  - Ms. Sourial responded that the report itself does not make any recommendations.

Agency Updates

- **Los Angeles County Flood Control District (Terri Grant)**
  - The Arroyo Seco Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study is a partnership with the USACE which will identify restoration opportunities along the Arroyo Seco. The USACE is evaluating various alternatives for the Arroyo Seco and is expecting to identify a Tentatively Selected Plan of alternatives within the next couple months. Public meetings will be held to help inform these plans.
  - The County is working closely with the AB530 Lower River Working Group, which meets on a monthly basis. The working group is in the early stages of developing a plan with subcommittees to look at different areas and issues along the river. Events are scheduled for October and November to gather community input on the plan. The Lower LA River Revitalization Plan is anticipated to be complete by early 2018.

- **City of Los Angeles (Michael Affeldt)**
  - The LA River Valley Bikeway partnership between the City and the County is underway, with BOE as the lead agency. The project team is currently conducting an analysis of the bikeway alignment. Public meetings are forthcoming.
  - City is negotiating acquisition of the G2 parcel. City Council is moving forward on that effort. Updates will be provided to the committee as they become available.
  - LADOT will be closing portions of the bike path in Elysian Valley over the next few months in the interest of safety while USACE conducts non-native plant removal in the channel.

- **US Army Corps of Engineers (David Van Dorpe)**
  - In addition to non-native plant removal, USACE will also be repairing stone within the channel in Elysian Valley.
  - A workshop will be held on November 7th, 2016 at 6:30pm at the Friendship Auditorium. This will give members of the community an opportunity to learn more about the LA River, the HESCO barriers, and flood risk reduction measures.
The House of Representatives passed their version of the WRDA, which means that the House and Senate may have a bill to authorize construction of the LA River Ecosystem Restoration Project early next year.

**Call for Projects for Future Meetings**
Applications requested by October 21st which can be found at www.lariver.org/rcc.

**Public Comments/Other Items:**
- Karin Flores (river advocate) announced that she will be delivering a letter to the County Supervisors and the LACFCD, requesting that if there is an update to the County LA River Master Plan, funding for biota be included. Ms. Flores also suggested that existing data pertaining to the entirety of the river should be researched as part of the update, and new surveys should be conducted wherever data does not already exist. Ms. Flores requested that any final reports pertaining to the existing conditions of the river be publicly available.
- William Preston-Bowling (FoLAR) announced that FoLAR’s annual fundraiser is coming up and encouraged everyone to attend.
- Tim Brick (Arroyo Seco Foundation) suggested that tributaries to the LA River are an important part of the river system and should be included in the various planning documents currently in development for the LA River. Mr. Brick stressed the importance of tributaries to the river, from which habitats extend, and that the watershed ranges beyond the 51-mile channel. Mr. Brick would like to see tributaries included in any updates to the County Master Plan.
- Tim Brick (Arroyo Seco Foundation) commented that he is pleased to see progress on the Arroyo Seco Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study but asked the committee to share additional details regarding schedule and the reasons for postponement. Mr. Brick requested that the County and USACE provide more frequent and transparent updates on the study and requested that it be presented at a future LARCC meeting.

**Next Meeting:**
The next RCC meeting will be hosted by the City on Monday, January 9, 2017, from 1:00 – 3:00 pm, LA City Hall (200 N. Spring Street – Room TBD).

**Closing Comments**
Gary Hildebrand thanked all committee members and attendees for their participation.

Comments regarding this meeting summary should be directed to Ernesto Rivera, erivera@dpw.lacounty.gov, and Sarah Ahmed, sahmed@dpw.lacounty.gov.

For more information about the LA River Cooperation Committee, and to access meeting documents, please visit: www.lariver.org/rcc.