

DATE: March 30, 2022

TO: WCA Governing Board

FROM: Johnathan Perisho, Project Manager

THROUGH: Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Item 14: Consideration of a resolution to (1) ratify grant application and (2) accept funding from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy for Parque dos Rios Improvements, and (3) approve award of contract to the Conservation Corps of Long Beach in an amount not to exceed Ninety-Three Thousand Dollars.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA) Governing Board (1) ratify grant application for One Hundred Sixty-Seven Thousand Dollars (\$167,000), (2) accept funding from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) for Parque dos Rios Improvements, included as Exhibit A, and (3) approve award of a contract to the Conservation Corps of Long Beach in an amount not to exceed Ninety-Three Thousand Dollars (\$93,000).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Parque dos Rios is an early implementation project of the Lower LA River revitalization efforts that was completed August 31, 2021, and which is serving as a case study for impacts to be anticipated in inactivated reaches.

Post implementation there have already been substantial impacts to site elements. Investments into project development, target hardening, and landscape and interpretation elements that have demonstrated resistance to physical force and other tampering will be key to a high-integrity presentation and sustainability of site features. Additionally, research and development of materials will set groundwork for continued improvements for 7 acres of upland habitat and potential for riparian wetland habitat as part of a wider water capture and conservation project. Installations here will set examples for what elements and interventions are most effective and will support a foundation to build confidence and safe, high-performance landscapes now and in time to come.

As proposed in the grant application the WCA would take lead on project management, coordinating official park opening, research and development of materials to set a groundwork for restoration and water management opportunities, developing and ordering interpretation materials, and on ecological enhancements pending approvals and coordination with County Public Works Flood Control District for a value of work up to \$74,000.

The Conservation Corps of Long Beach would take lead on site cleanup and hardening, including demolition and repair of facilities, replacing and improving gates, and installation of materials together with presence on site purposefully under contract for the WCA led River Ranger Demonstration Service in tandem with improvements to observe and report on site conditions and continued resilience of site elements for a value of work up to \$93,000.

The recommended actions would approve necessary funding and activities to complete the proposed scope for a safe, improved park site and to align next steps for more substantial improvements.

BACKGROUND: Implementation of Parque dos Rios elements was completed August 31, 2021. The project consists of viewing areas and shade structure, decorative gates, seating, decorative waste containers, native plants and trees, slope stabilization, water service establishment and new water service meter, irrigation, bike racks, interpretive signage, and the preparatory work and grading for the project. Deed restrictions and notice of completion have been filed with the County-Recorder and the improvements are publicly accessible. These amenities are among the first completed in alignment with the Lower LA River Revitalization Plan as part of the wider Opportunity Area 3: Rio Hondo Confluence Area.

The WCA governing board approved award of construction contract for Parque dos Rios in September 2017 in an amount not-to-exceed \$1,100,000. Funding included The LA County Park and Open Space District Proposition A funds in the amount of \$1,584,740.68, Senate Bill 1 (SB1) Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017 Active Transportation Program (ATP) for \$195,000, and Proposition 68 Parks and Water Bond of 2018 funds for \$60,000.

The Conservation Corps of Long Beach (CCLB) was awarded a construction contract July 23, 2019 for the initial implementation. At this time, CCLB has in storage decorative gates that had been removed from their location in separate instances and by separate methods. The corps is well-positioned to reissue orders for scope and materials for the project site, and to improve on installations, including limited scope technical labor necessary, e.g. for welding, and significant opportunities for workforce development on site and interfacing with the public.

Lessons learned from implementation and post implementation are already informing other project concepts and improvements will continue to be tested against prevailing site conditions, including vulnerabilities to vandalism, tagging, theft, and influences on sense of security, sense of place, and awareness of management and broader vision for river projects and stewardship. Significant impacts are expected even during daylight hours. Removal of gates has been unprecedented in other reaches understood to have higher visibility and levels of traffic, but which has happened at this project location. Multiple incidents of arson and violent crime have been recorded in recent time. At the same time, improvements made to date already see visitors at overlooks, and observations of small mammals and invertebrates in planted areas.

Geotechnical work completed under a Safe, Clean Water technical assistance grant identified subsurface waste that limits further work on the habitat portion of the site inaccessible to the public. Research and development of materials and estimates will be necessary to identify opportunities for restoration and further habitat improvements, including concepts for lining and restoring an existing Caltrans channel that drains to the site south of Imperial Highway for wetland habitat as part of a wider water capture, cleansing, and infiltration project as feasible and beneficial. This would concern groundwork to satisfy LA County Public Health conditions and supporting potential applications to related funding sources concerning acquisitions and development under relevant funding sources such as the Safe, Clean Water Program and others.

Advancing this project and others on the lower LA River will be instrumental in providing critical infrastructure in the present, and for creating a foundation for more significant infrastructure investments into the future for functioning systems essential for climate resilience and the long-term wellbeing of all

our LA Basin communities. Safe, functional, and resistant facilities are key to moving this work forward and for establishing senses of safety, visibility, place, and vision for the river.

FISCAL INFORMATION: The WCA has proposed a grant application project budget of \$167,000 from the RMC Lower LA River program. The proposed performance period is from award through January 31, 2023 for the following scope.

Task		Total
1	Project Management/Park Opening	\$ 12,000.00
2	Restoration Research and Planning	\$ 12,000.00
3	Contractor Mobilization	\$ 10,000.00
4	Site Clearing: cleaning surfaces, repainting, removing/filling viewscope posts, fence removal, disposal fees	\$ 46,000.00
5	Gate Hardening	\$ 12,000.00
6	Pedestrian Gate Replacement	\$ 12,000.00
7	Interpretation Panels, Dedication Plaque	\$ 18,000.00
8	Interpretation Installation	\$ 13,000.00
9	Ecological Enhancement	\$ 20,000.00
10	Indirect	\$ 12,000.00

Capital Total \$ 131,000.00

Grant Total \$ 167,000.00

Project Description

Parque dos Rios Improvements

A. Project Description

The Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA) is submitting this application to the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) Proposition 68 Grant Program for the Lower LA River to improve site elements at Parque dos Rios.

Parque dos Rios is an early implementation project of the Lower LA River revitalization efforts funded by County Regional Park and Open Space District Proposition A and a case study for impacts to be expected in inactivated reaches. Lessons learned are already informing other project concepts and improvements will continue to be tested against prevailing site conditions, including vulnerabilities to vandalism, tagging, theft, and influences on sense of security, sense of place, and awareness of management and broader vision for river projects and stewardship. Significant impacts are expected even during daylight hours. Removal of gates has been unprecedented in other reaches, but has happened at this project location. Multiple incidents of arson and violent crime have been recorded in recent time. At the same time, improvements made to date already see visitors at overlooks, and observations of small mammals and invertebrates in planted areas.

Unrecorded subsurface waste has also presented a challenge for plans to improve upland and riparian habitat across seven acres, and to implement site improvements for water management which may include future agreements, acquisition, and improvements for water capture and conservation extending into property south of Imperial Highway where Parque dos Rios drains.

Presentation on the ground sets expectations and support for continued work. Investments into project development, target hardening, and landscape and interpretation elements that have demonstrated resistance to physical force and other tampering will be key to a high-integrity presentation. Installations here will set examples for what elements and interventions are most effective, and will support a foundation to build confidence and safe, functional spaces now and in time to come.

Scope of Work

The proposed scope of work includes the following:

1. Project Management/Park Opening

WCA staff time to support management of grant and initiatives under the following tasks, including direct staff time to manage and deliver tasks, and to organize official park opening.

2. Restoration Research and Planning

Geotechnical work completed under a Safe, Clean Water technical assistance grant identified subsurface waste that limits further work on the habitat portion of the site inaccessible to the public. Research and development of materials and estimates will be necessary to identify opportunities for restoration and further habitat improvements, including concepts for lining and restoring an existing Caltrans channel that drains to the site south of Imperial Highway for wetland habitat as part of a wider water capture, cleansing, and infiltration project as feasible and beneficial. This would concern groundwork to satisfy LA County Public Health conditions, and supporting potential applications to related funding sources concerning acquisitions and development under relevant funding sources such as the Safe, Clean Water Program and others.

3. Contractor Mobilization

Contractor time to coordinate and deliver project tasks, and to ensure commitments to agreement terms and budgets.

4. Site Clearing

Increasing presence and positive interactions on the Lower LA River is a leading approach planned to improve sense of security and to shift perceptions and expectations around river facilities. The degree of impacts observed in the vicinity of Parque dos Rios are virtually unknown on other stretches of the river where traffic is understood to be more regular with more natural surveillance at all hours.

This task will include regular visits to the facilities to improve sense of presence and natural surveillance as part of site improvement work, reporting, and documenting conditions and sustained resilience of site elements to inform projects throughout the Lower LA River.

This task includes time for conservation corps members to be on site to present friendly presence and points of contact in providing services to repair, replace, and improve site elements. These tasks include but are not limited to cleaning surfaces, repainting of designs on site elements and to add coating for resistance to further tampering, and also to include the removal and filling of viewscope posts, fencing, and pickup of trash, debris, and weeding, as well as associated disposal fees before and following site improvements under this proposed scope.

5. Gate Hardening

Parque dos Rios is the only instance of gate theft on the LA River known to WCA staff. Vehicular and pedestrian gates at the site have been removed in separate instances and by separate methods which appear to include both handheld grinder and plasma torch/arc welder. While the vehicular gates were never stolen from the site, they have both been removed from their welded hinges at multiple points and the pedestrian gate has been stolen in total.

Gate hardening will include labor and materials for reinstalling vehicular gates stored offsite by the Conservation Corps of Long Beach with additional plating and welding structured to significantly improve resistance against tampering. Target hardening of the pedestrian gate will also be ensured under this task.

6. Pedestrian Gate Replacement

A new pedestrian gate will be ordered and installed. Pending available hardening for the custom design created for the site, this may alternately necessitate a different fabrication designed to be significantly more resistant to tampering and less desirable for attempts to remove from the site.

7. Interpretation Panels, Dedication Plaque

Resistant elements and informative, positive messaging are foundational to the intent for Parque dos Rios at this phase of project and programming around Lower LA River revitalization efforts.

The porcelain enamel interpretation signs included in the original design and installation have demonstrated extraordinary resistance to evidence of multiple applications of extreme direct force likely to have included smashing by metal rods, boulders, and heavy debris. The frame configuration is also likely to have been unsuccessfully targeted by tampering attempts, as evidenced by destruction of adjacent hardened metal elements. The panels and frames continue to show little damage and a high degree of fidelity that still looks new.

Content for three new interpretation panels will be researched, designed, developed by WCA staff, and the panels and associated frames will be ordered, fabricated, and placement directed under this task. This task will also include the replacement of a dedication plaque including recognition of RMC funding with heavier materials and hardening than originally specified to resist tampering. Narratives and graphics are to be reviewed by both RMC staff and the LA County Flood Control District to be placed within the Flood Control District Right of Way on the LA River bikeway.

8. Interpretation Installation

This task concerns the installation of the interpretive panels and dedication plaque, as well as the associated frames and hardware.

9. Ecological Enhancement

The LA County Public Works Flood Control District easement includes landscape areas adjacent the bikeway with unirrigated planted areas where wildlife is observed, as well as substantial landscape areas with opportunity for additional compatible planting. Pending coordination and approvals additional planting that can subsist with limited if any additional irrigation can be implemented in the fall of the project period.

10. Indirect

Line item of up to 10% in indirect as an eligible grant cost for administration and associated operational costs proportionate to WCA expenditures.

B. Statement of Need

Communities along the Lower LA River are historically underserved with low per capita open space access. Additionally, less than 5% of original wetlands across LA County remain, and opportunities for wetland riparian and adjacent upland habitat are among the most significant in supporting habitat and

biodiversity targets in alignment with the State Wildlife Action Plan, 30x30 initiative, and Lower LA River Revitalization Master Plan among others. Advancing projects on the lower LA River will be instrumental in providing critical infrastructure in the present, and for creating a foundation for more significant infrastructure investments into the future for functioning systems essential for climate resilience and the long-term wellbeing of all our LA Basin communities. Safe, functional, and resistant facilities are instrumental to moving this work forward and for establishing senses of safety, visibility, place, and vision for the river.

C. Audience and Geographic Area Served

The site and proposed improvements are located on the Lower LA River bikeway, a Class 1 bike/trail connection envisioned as one of the most significant corridors for people and wildlife across the wider LA Basin. Communities immediately adjacent the site and connected both to the north and south along the LA River bikeway are among those recognized as historically underserved and significantly disadvantaged. Nonvehicular travel is also understood to be significantly more common in this area for all destinations than in many other parts of the LA basin, where the most common nonvehicular transportation purpose has been understood to be recreational through past survey efforts.

D. Goals and Objectives

Establish increased presence on the LA River through implementation and improvement of site elements to be evaluated for effectiveness in tandem with project activities and by follow up site visits including reporting and photo documentation of the following

- Installation of high-quality interpretation and dedication materials
- Reinstallation and hardening of gates
- Repainted and treated surfaces for greater resistance
- Waste and debris management including removal of fencing, viewscope posts and holes, and debris

Advance habitat and potential for restoration along the LA River, and to support water conservation, capture, and cleansing

- Research and material development to advance compliance with County Public Health requirements and in alignment with potential funding opportunities for water conservation and capture, as well as further habitat improvements to restore site drainage and vegetate total landscape area
- Planting of locally native vegetation as feasible appropriate for existing site conditions in support of local habitat to be evaluated and demonstrated through photo documentation

E. Community Outreach

Proposed improvements are consistent with park developments that have been made pursuant to community engagement through the Parque dos Rios park plan and as also identified through the AB530 Lower LA River Revitalization Plan efforts and draft LA River Master Plan. Corps members completing a

majority of capital improvements and reporting will also be on site for positive interactions, and interpretive elements are designed to present a forward-facing presence and information about this section of the river and vision for future work and community participation.

Concerning RMC Environmental Justice Policy and Tribal Consultation Policy, open space and habitat improvements are the most feasible and suitable land uses along the LA River for water quality and security, climate resilience, support for biodiversity increasingly in decline, and flood management. Additionally, open space and habitat—a thriving river with actual plants, trees, and diverse wildlife—are understood to be community priorities as evidenced through ongoing engagement efforts, as well as significant concern for sense of safety and security as driving foci of this proposed work.

F. Monitoring and Assessment Plan

Monitoring and assessment is the foundation of project goals and objectives to be carried out through the project period, and through property management in perpetuity. Lessons learned will continue to influence projects along the Lower LA River and across the wider WCA/RMC territory, and will be points of reference in coordinating with partners.

G. Organizational Capacity

The WCA is uniquely prepared to provide these services both as a cross-jurisdictional local government agency with comprehensive objectives aligned with the RMC, and also as an entity empowered to adopt and lead projects helping build capacity in high-need and underserved communities along the Lower LA River corridor. The WCA would conduct this Technical Assistance in direct and regular contact with RMC staff to ensure expedient and targeted progress throughout the performance period.

Founded in 2003, the WCA is a joint powers agency of the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) and the Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LACFCD). The WCA mission to *Connect Communities through Nature* by expanding and improving the open space and recreational opportunities for the conservation, restoration, and environmental enhancement of the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers Watersheds. The WCA plans, coordinates, implements, and maintains open spaces in a territory ranging from the San Gabriel Mountains to the coast.

The WCA has led the acquisition, planning and development of a variety of park and open space projects with complex jurisdictional and entitlement considerations. This work has provided the WCA with experience relative to the proposed scope of work, including multi-jurisdictional coordination, community engagement, and site programming/planning. Sample projects completed and in progress include: the Azusa River Wilderness Park Acquisition, Planning, Design and Implementation (approximately \$10.2M); Walnut Creek Habitat and Open Space Park Acquisition and Planning (approximately \$8.5M); Parque Dos Rios Habitat Enhancement and LA River Trail Bike Stop (\$1.4M); Duck Farm River Park Design and Implementation (\$10.2M); as well as, Master Planning efforts for Cattle Canyon Public Engagement and Improvement Plan (\$770k); Gateway Cities and Rivers Urban Greening Master Plan (\$630K); and the Emerald Necklace Feasibility Study & Implementation Plan (\$560K), among others.

March 30, 2022 - Item 14

RESOLUTION 2022-10

**RESOLUTION OF THE WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
RATIFYING THE APPLICATION FOR THE WATER QUALITY, SUPPLY AND
INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2014 (PROPOSITION 1), AND
FOR THE CALIFORNIA DROUGHT, WATER, PARKS, CLIMATE, COASTAL
PROTECTION, AND OUTDOOR ACCESS FOR ALL ACT OF 2018
(PROPOSITION 68), FOR THE PARQUE DOS RIOS PROJECT; ACCEPTING A
GRANT FROM THE RIVERS AND MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY FOR THE
PROJECT; AND APPROVING AWARD OF CONTRACT TO THE
CONSERVATION CORPS OF LONG BEACH**

WHEREAS, the Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA) has been established as a joint powers agency between the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) and the Los Angeles County Flood Control District; and

WHEREAS, the WCA has further been established to focus on projects which will provide open space, habitat restoration, and watershed improvement projects in both the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers watershed; and

WHEREAS, this action ratifies the application to the RMC Water Quality, Supply and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1) and the RMC California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access For All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68) Grant Program for the Parque Dos Rios Project; and

WHEREAS, the people of the State of California have enacted the Water Quality, Supply and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1) and the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access For All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68), which provide funds for the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) Grant Program, and

WHEREAS, the RMC has been delegated the responsibility for the administration of the grant program in its jurisdiction, setting up necessary procedures, and

WHEREAS, said procedures established by the RMC require the WCA's Governing Body to certify by resolution the approval of the Application before submission of said Application to the State, and

WHEREAS, the WCA, as Applicant, will enter into a contract with the State of California for the Project, and

WHEREAS, this action will accept a grant from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy for the Parque Dos Rios Project; and

WHEREAS, this action will approve award of contract to the Conservation Corps of Long Beach for the Project; and

WHEREAS, the proposed action is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act;
NOW

Therefore be it resolved that the WCA hereby:

1. **FINDS** that this action is consistent with the purposes and objectives of the WCA.
2. **FINDS** that the actions contemplated by this resolution are exempt from the environmental impact report requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
3. **ADOPTS** the staff report dated March 30, 2022.
4. **RATIFIES** the filing of an Application for local assistance funds from the RMC proposition 1 and RMC proposition 68 Grant Program for the Parque Dos Rios project under the Water Quality, Supply and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1) and the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access For All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68); and
5. **CERTIFIES** that the Parque Dos Rios Project is consistent with local or regional land use plans or Programs; and
6. **CERTIFIES** that the Project is consistent with the goals of Proposition 1 including multi-beneficial and multi-jurisdictional ecosystem and watershed protection projects in accordance with statewide priorities; and
7. **CERTIFIES** that the Project is consistent with the goals for Proposition 68 developing urban recreation projects and habitat protection or restoration projects in accordance with statewide priorities; and
8. **CERTIFIES** that the WCA has or will have sufficient funds to operate and maintain the Project that is being submitted for funding consideration; and
9. **CERTIFIES** that the WCA has reviewed and understands the General Requirements and General Policies of the RMC Proposition 1 and RMC Proposition 68 Grant Program Guidelines; and

10. **APPOINTS** the WCA governing board chair, or designee, to conduct all negotiations, and to execute and submit all documents including, but not limited to, applications, agreements, amendments, payment requests and so forth, which may be necessary for the completion of the aforementioned project.
11. **ACCEPTS** a grant from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy for \$167,000 for the Parque Dos Rios Project.
12. **APPROVES** award of contract to the Conservation Corps of Long Beach in an amount not to exceed \$93,000.

~ End of Resolution ~

//

Motion: _____ Second: _____

Ayes: _____ Nays: _____ Abstentions: _____

Passed and Adopted by the Board of the
WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
 On March 30, 2022

 Herlinda Chico
 Governing Board Chair

ATTEST: _____
 Elizabeth St. John
 Deputy Attorney General