

DATE: June 1, 2023

TO: WCA Governing Board

FROM: Jane Tsong, Project Manager

THROUGH: Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Item 13: Consideration of a resolution to certify completion of the Los Angeles River Environmental Flows Supplemental Analysis (RMC18013).

RECOMMENDATION: That the Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA) Governing Board certify completion of the Los Angeles River Environmental Flows Supplemental Analysis (RMC18013).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The project was completed June 30, 2022. The grant added analysis of potential recreation and wildlife impacts, and community engagement to the Lower Los Angeles River to the State Water Board's Los Angeles River Environmental Flows Study:

- Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP) was engaged to evaluate effects of changes in the amount of discharge on water quality parameters (sediment, conductance, metals), and to expand the Flows Study to include impacts on Rio Hondo and Compton Creek.
- WCA participated in shaping Third Party review of the Flows Study and recommendations by Stillwater Sciences, and holding a briefing on this topic for conservancy leadership. Stillwater emphasized that the current condition of the LA River cannot be used as a standard for evaluating impacts from reduced flows. Any decision to change flows must consider their impact on future opportunities for ecological and recreational uses.
- Heal the Bay formed the Lower Los Angeles River Stream Team to give students from Lower LA River institutions of higher education a work opportunity that involved them with their local river. The team gained hands on experience in collecting data (water temperature and user activity) and data analysis. The Stream Team helped to compile results into Heal the Bay's Annual River Report Card. This was the first time the Lower Los Angeles River was represented in the River Report Card. The data draws attention to dramatic water quality disparities along the LA River. Social media posts, community engagement activities, and inclusion of this work in the annual River Report card allowed these issues around the role of the flows Los Angeles River to be shared more broadly in the larger community. Water temperature and systematically collected user data were among the data gaps identified by SCCWRP in the Flows Study.
- Addressing another data gap identified by SCCWRP, Cooper Ecological Monitoring was engaged to complete what may be the first detailed mapping of in channel vegetation in both the Upper and Lower Los Angeles River channels. This baseline dry season inventory documents a dynamic and changing 'novel' ecosystem in the river channel—an ecosystem that has no parallels in natural, historically present ecosystems. The team recorded 243

identifiable plant taxa within the channel of the Los Angeles River, of which at least 98 (about 40%) are considered native to California.

The data and analysis produced by the Supplemental Analysis elucidate current ecosystem functions provided by the flows of the Los Angeles River, and document baseline conditions that can be referred to for comparison should minimum base flows be reduced in the future. Acknowledgement of the recreational and ecosystem services provided by existing dry season flows should be considered in future decisions regarding establishing minimum base flows in the river.

Grant activities are summarized and products produced under this grant can be viewed and downloaded at:

https://www.wca.ca.gov/la_river_flows

The Flood Control District permit for in-channel water temperature testing which was funded under this grant will be renewed by local partners, who will continue data collection beyond the scope of this grant, under separate funding. Expansion of this data set will provide more robust data to inform planning to benefit aquatic species.

BACKGROUND: The grant added analysis of potential recreation and wildlife impacts, and community engagement to the Lower Los Angeles River to the State Water Board's Los Angeles River Environmental Flows Study

FISCAL INFORMATION: Final grant closeout is contingent on WCA Board certification of project completion. There is no fiscal impact.

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RESOLUTION 2023-16

RESOLUTION OF THE WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TO CERTIFY COMPLETION OF THE LA RIVER ENVIRONMENTAL FLOWS STUDY SUPPLEMENTAL ANALYSIS (RMC18013).

WHEREAS, the Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA) has been established to facilitate joint projects between the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy and Los Angeles County Flood Control District; and

WHEREAS, The Watershed Conservation Authority has 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 will certify completion of the LA River Environmental Flows Study Supplemental Analysis (RMC18013); and

WHEREAS, this action is exempt from the environmental impact report requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); 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.
3. **ADOPTS** the staff report dated June 1, 2023.
4. **CERTIFIES** completion of the LA River Environmental Flows Study Supplemental Analysis (RMC18013).

~ End of Resolution ~

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Motion: _____ Second: _____

Ayes: _____ Nays: _____ Abstentions: _____

Resolution 2023-16

Passed and Adopted by the Board of the
WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
On June 1, 2023

Victoria Paul
Governing Board Vice Chair

ATTEST: _____
Elizabeth St. John
Deputy Attorney General