

## Modification of River or Stream Channel

### Proposal Overview

The Proposal includes eight projects that include modification of a river or stream channel.

Project Short Name	Stream / River
2. JWPCP Marshland Enhancement	Wilmington Drain
4. Las Virgenes Creek Restoration Project	Las Virgenes Creek
6. Morris Dam Water Supply Project	San Gabriel River
7. North Atwater Creek	North Atwater Creek
8. Pacoima Wash Project	Pacoima Wash
9. San Gabriel Valley Arundo Removal	San Gabriel River & Rio Hondo River
10. Solstice Creek Habitat Restoration	Solstice Creek
13. Wilmington Drain Restoration	Wilmington Drain

All Proposal projects that include some form of channel modification will be fully mitigated as needed. The mitigation measures and status of documentation for each project differ so each are explained by project in the following sections.

## 2. JWPCP Marshland Enhancement Project

The JWPCP marshland is related to the Wilmington Drain project because of the connection via an overflow channel. When the water in Wilmington Drain reaches approximately three feet deep (the drain is approximately 11 feet deep), it will automatically start flowing into the marshland through a pipe with a flapper valve. During an average rainfall season, Wilmington Drain will automatically overflow into the marshland during approximately six storm events. However, the JWPCP Marshland Enhancement Project itself does not modify a river or stream channel and is only included in this Attachment for clarification.

A CDFG Streambed Alteration Agreement was acquired in November 2005 (see Appendix 5-2). Reports on plant survival and vegetative cover must be submitted to the CDFG yearly for 5 years. Prior to construction or site preparation activities, nesting bird surveys must be performed between March 1 and September 1. Activities within the wetted portion of a stream must be limited to the period of May 1 to October 15, and may be conducted when the stream is not actively flowing outside of these dates.

The project requires compliance with CEQA as part of the environmental review process and was fulfilled with a Negative Declaration approved on July 27, 2005. A USACE 404 Permit for purposes of Filling in Waters of the U.S. was approved on November 17, 2005. A CDFG Streambed Alteration Agreement and an RWQCB 401 Water Quality Certification were approved in November 2005.

No mitigation are required since the project itself was a mitigation measure and because replacement ratios of 2:1 or greater had been specified for both habitat and vegetative impacts that would occur during the project. However, LACSD will conduct the following mitigation measures identified in the Initial Study:

- Conduct nesting bird surveys prior to construction
- Retain a qualified biologist to be on site during critical parts of construction
- Utilize best management practices (BMPs) to minimize storm water runoff
- Coordinate a construction traffic management plan with responsible agencies
- Limit project-related traffic to off-peak commute hours

## 4. Las Virgenes Creek Restoration Project

In FY1999/2000, the City of Calabasas commissioned a feasibility study as a result of the Gateway Plan to consider alternatives to the existing concrete trapezoidal channel that would facilitate wildlife movement and provide native riparian habitat. The “Feasibility Study for Removal of Concrete Lining in Las Virgenes Creek Near Agoura Road,” completed in February 2000, concluded that either a gabion structure or concrete block revetment liner would be feasible alternatives to the existing concrete. However, the restoration project we are proposing will not be limited to implementation of one of these options. It is our understanding that there is much more habitat restoration that can be accomplished in this creek reach than are realized by this study. For example, the existing Feasibility Study assumed that the entire length of the channel would be retrofit with the same alternative lining, thus severely limiting the restoration potential. By allowing for a combination of appropriate lining based on sub-area flow regimes, the amount of structural liner needed can be vastly reduced. There are several other general assumptions made in the Feasibility Study that contributed to the ultra-conservative gabion or revetment design recommendations. This project will complete a detailed engineering design placing priority on viable habitat and wildlife connectivity so as to enable the City to implement the best restoration strategy suitable for this area that can meet the stated project goals while still providing adequate flood and erosion control.

In May 2005, CDFG certified a DeMinimus Impact Finding. The Findings of exemptions included:

1. An Initial Study has been prepared by the City of Calabasas to evaluate the project's effects on wildlife resources, if any; and
2. The City of Calabasas hereby finds that there is no evidence before the City that the project will have potential for an adverse effect on the environment; and
3. The project will not result in any adverse impact to the following resources:
  - a. Riparian land, rivers, streams, watercourses and wetlands;
  - b. Native and non-native plant life and the soil required to sustain habitat for fish and wildlife;
  - c. Rare and unique plant life and ecological communities dependant on plant life;
  - d. Listed threatened and endangered plants and animals and the habitat in which they are believed to reside;
  - e. All species listed as protected or identified for special management in the Fish and Game Code, the Public Resources Code, the Water Code or regulations adopted thereunder;
  - f. All marine and terrestrial species subject to the jurisdiction of the Department of Fish and Game and the ecological communities in which they reside;
  - g. All air and water resources, the degradation of which will individually or cumulatively result in a loss of biological diversity among the plants and animals residing in that air and water.

The City of Calabasas prepared an Initial Study in February 2005 and Mitigated Negative Declaration was completed in March 2005. The MND was submitted on March 2, 2005. The Notice of Determination was submitted on April 4, 2005.

The mitigation measures related to the channel modification include the following:

#### **Biological**

- Preservation of specific species and habitat areas,
- Replacement of specific plant species such that no net reduction in number of plants occurs, and
- Construction during the summer period when erosion and sedimentation would be minimal,
- Use of stabilizers for bank erosion,
- Selection of staging areas that would minimize the impact to existing habitat areas,
- Other measures as appropriate.

#### **Hydrology and Water Quality**

- Section 404 and 401 approvals prior to implementation of the creek restoration project.
- Use of BMPs during construction,
- Avoidance of sensitive habitat areas and/or,
- Limitation of construction activities to low flow, low rainfall periods.

#### **Utilities and Service Systems**

- Implementation of this drainage modification has the potential to adversely affect drainage in the area of Las Virgenes Creek by altering the stormwater carrying capacity of the channel.

Further information on specific actions required, when monitoring is to occur, monitoring frequency and the responsible agency(s) or party(s) are documented in Appendix 2 of the Final Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration.

## 6. Morris Dam Water Supply Enhancement Project

The Morris Dam Water Supply Enhancement Project will require a 1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement so that the reservoir may be drained to modify the intake structure. However no alteration to the stream or enlargement of the reservoir footprint will be made. All increased reservoir capacity will be realized within existing reservoir capacity by modifying dam systems and intake structure so that the dam can operate with a lower minimum pool.

A mitigation plan has not been defined but will be defined during completion of environmental documentation.

The impacts of the project will be temporary and will be fully mitigated. Best management practices (BMP) will be employed for water quality impacts. These BMPs will include desilting basins and check dams to minimize sediment-loading downstream of the dam during dewatering activities and protection measures to ensure minimal impacts to downstream resources. When the reservoir is lowered for outlet modification work, fish in the reservoir (most of which are non-native) will be removed and relocated to recreational areas approved by CDFG.

As is the current practice for releases from Morris Dam, the water released from the reservoir during its lowering will be directed to LACDPW numerous groundwater recharge facilities downstream. These facilities include San Gabriel Canyon Spreading Grounds, Santa Fe Spreading Grounds, Peck Water Conservation Park, Rio Hondo Coastal Spreading Grounds, San Gabriel Coastal Spreading Grounds and the soft bottom reaches of the San Gabriel River itself.

## 7. North Atwater Creek Restoration Project

This project will create a creek for an area that is currently a ditch that only carries water during storm events. The site where the newly created creek would be is not currently designated as a creek. This project will also remove evasive and non-native plants along the current project site. A Notice of Exemption will be issued for this project since this is an environmental enhancement project without any adverse impact.

## 8. Pacoima Wash Greenway Project: 8<sup>th</sup> Street Park

This creek is contained in an urbanized and completely concrete channel. All activities will be conducted outside of the creek channel. The affect of the activities conducted near the creek will have a restoring effect on the creek ecosystem. The implementation of this project will transform a vacant lot into a restored upland riparian habitat. This project will not only improve the aesthetic value of this section of the creek, but will also restore native vegetation communities and watershed functions. The restoration of these native vegetation communities will greatly increase the quality of the existing habitat and will encourage a more diverse community of fauna to return to the area.

The activities involved in the implementation of this project will also have significant water quality improvement effects. The residential runoff from the neighboring area currently runs untreated into the creek. With the implementation of this project, the runoff will be diverted and the water will be separated from trash and sediment. After the water is separated from debris, it will be cleansed and infiltrated as it is diverted through a vegetated bio-swale and ultimately infiltrated into a sand media infiltration basin.

Mitigation measures for this project will be used to offset any effect on cultural resources, noise and dust. In the case that historical cultural resources are found onsite, the work will be stopped until an analysis has been done and it is proven that continuing work will have no adverse effect. Mechanized tools will be

used only during business hours to ensure that there is no negative effect. In the event that an activity is causing an increased amount of dust, measures such as water spraying will be used as mitigation.

Within the required CEQA process for this project an Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration were prepared and were approved on April 15, 2005 and June 1, 2005, respectively.

## 9. San Gabriel Valley Riparian Invasive Weed Control

The current CDFG Streambed Alteration Agreement for permitting invasive weed control work at Whittier Narrows (R5-2002-0355) has been extended to December 31, 2007. The agreement includes no mitigation measure because removal of invasive plant biomass will alter the vegetation in the streambed but will cause no alterations to the streambed itself. This project will enhance riparian habitat so will not require mitigation.

The USACE Operations Branch issued a Categorical Exclusion in February 2002, renewed and expanded May 11, 2006 for this project. The Categorical Exclusion allows the right of entry to remove *Arundo donax* and/or other targeted invasive, non-native plants from Corps riparian areas in the Los Angeles Country Drainage Area. The Categorical Exclusion begins FY 2005 through FY 2010 with an option for a five-year renewal.

## 10. Solstice Creek Southern Steelhead Habitat Restoration

The NEPA permitting requirements for this project were identified and addressed. An Environmental Assessment and subsequent public comment period were completed (February 1, 2005) with a permit issued (FONSI determination) for the entire Solstice Creek project area in August 2005. On November 10, 2003 the park's requirements for NEPA compliance for the invasive species removal and re-vegetation activities received a categorical exclusion.

The environmental protection measures determined for this project during environmental documentation include only using a dibble for planting whenever planting occurs in an area of known archeological resources and posting public notices to inform the public about ecological restoration activities.

## 13. Wilmington Drain Restoration Multiuse Project

The project will include gabion bank stabilization that will expand and correct the current use of gabions near the downstream end of the creek. This work will take place during dry season and will not have any adverse impact on the creek.

The project will also remove non-native and evasive plant species and plant native vegetation. This work will also be conducted during dry season and will not have any impact on the creek.

One trash capture netting system will also be installed at the upstream end of this creek segment. This will be designed to not impact the hydraulic capacity of the stream and it will be constructed in a manner that will not cause soil erosion.

The environmental benefits of this project through its habitat restoration and trash capture and removal will greatly outweigh the marginal risk associated with potential soil erosion.