



## Notice of Preparation

**Date:** April 23, 2015

**To:** California Office of Planning and Research, Responsible and Trustee Agencies and Interested Parties

**Subject:** Notice of Preparation of an Integrated Feasibility Study/Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Impact Statement and Public Scoping Meeting

**Project:** Arroyo Seco Ecosystem Restoration Integrated Feasibility Study

**Lead Agency:** Los Angeles County Flood Control District

**Review Period:** April 23, 2015, through May 23, 2015

The Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LACFCD), the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), the lead agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) are preparing an Integrated Feasibility Study/Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (FS/EIS/EIR) for the Arroyo Seco Ecosystem Restoration Integrated Feasibility Study (Study) which would involve study and development of a plan consisting of aquatic and riparian habitat restoration along the Arroyo. The LACFCD is inquiring about your agency's views as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. In addition, the LACFCD is soliciting agency, stakeholder, and general public input on the scope of the proposed study, including ecosystem restoration activities such as restoring riparian habitat, and environmental issues to be addressed related to the study process, as well as other concerns you may have. To comply with CEQA, the LACFCD is providing a two-step process through this Notice of Preparation (NOP) and through a public meeting. As the operator and agency primarily responsible for maintenance of the Arroyo Seco, the LACFCD intends to rely upon the EIR for recommendations to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the ex officio governing board of the LACFCD, regarding consideration of future projects that are recommended within the study.

The Corps held a NEPA Public Scoping Meeting on October 29, 2014 at the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works Alhambra Headquarters building. The purpose of this meeting was to identify issues or concerns in advance of preparing an EIS, as well as solicit input from the public regarding the NEPA scoping process.

This Notice of Preparation (NOP) has been prepared to notify agencies and interested parties that the LACFCD is beginning preparation of an EIR pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for Arroyo Seco Ecosystem Restoration Study. The LACFCD has determined that an EIR will be prepared; therefore no Initial Study was prepared.

The project description, location, and other current information are contained in the attached Summary which is part of the NOP. Early resource agency participation is for the FS/EIS/EIR to address your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the FS/EIS/EIR when considering your permit or other approval for the project.

**Public Comments:** The LACFCD is soliciting the views of interested persons and agencies as to the scope and content of the environmental information to be evaluated in the FS/EIS/EIR. In accordance with CEQA, agencies are requested to review the project description in this NOP and provide their comments on environmental issues related to the statutory responsibilities of the agency. Other individuals and entities are encouraged to provide their comments on these issues as well.

Due to the time limits mandated by state law, all comments to the NOP are due **no later than 30 days**, after the posting of this notice, which will occur on April 23, 2015. Accordingly, written correspondence containing comments should be sent at the earliest possible date, but must be postmarked by May 23, 2015. Please send your comments to the address shown below. Include a return address or email address and a contact name in your agency with your comments.

County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works  
Watershed Management Division, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Attention: Mr. Patrick Goodfellow  
900 South Fremont Avenue  
Alhambra, CA 91803

or

[pgoodfellow@dpw.lacounty.gov](mailto:pgoodfellow@dpw.lacounty.gov)

**Scoping Meeting:** A scoping meeting will be held by the Lead Agency under CEQA to receive public comments regarding the scope and content of the FS/EIS/EIR. The scoping meeting will include a brief presentation providing an overview of the proposed Study and the CEQA process. After the presentation, oral comments will be accepted. Written comment forms will be supplied for those who wish to submit comments in writing at the scoping meeting. Written comments also may be submitted anytime during the NOP review period as noted above. The scoping meeting will be held as follows:

**DATE:** Wednesday, April 29, 2015  
**TIME:** 6:30 P.M.  
**LOCATION:** South Pasadena Public Library Community Room  
1100 Oxley St  
South Pasadena, CA 91030



Upon 72 hours' notice, Public Works can provide program information and publications in alternate formats or make other accommodations for people with disabilities. In addition, program documents are available at our main office in Alhambra (900 S Fremont Ave), which are accessible to individuals with disabilities. To request accommodations ONLY or for more Americans with Disabilities Act information, please contact our departmental Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator at (626) 458-4081 or by TDD (626) 282-7829, Monday through Thursday, from 7:00 AM to 5:30 PM.

**Project Location:** The proposed project area encompasses the lower portion of the Arroyo Seco that extends from the southern border of the Angeles National Forest (ANF) for approximately 11 miles downstream to approximately 0.5 miles from its confluence with the Los Angeles River. The downstream boundary of the Study area meets the border of the Corps' Los Angeles River Revitalization Study. The project boundaries are indicated in Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1 – Arroyo Seco Restoration Reach Map**

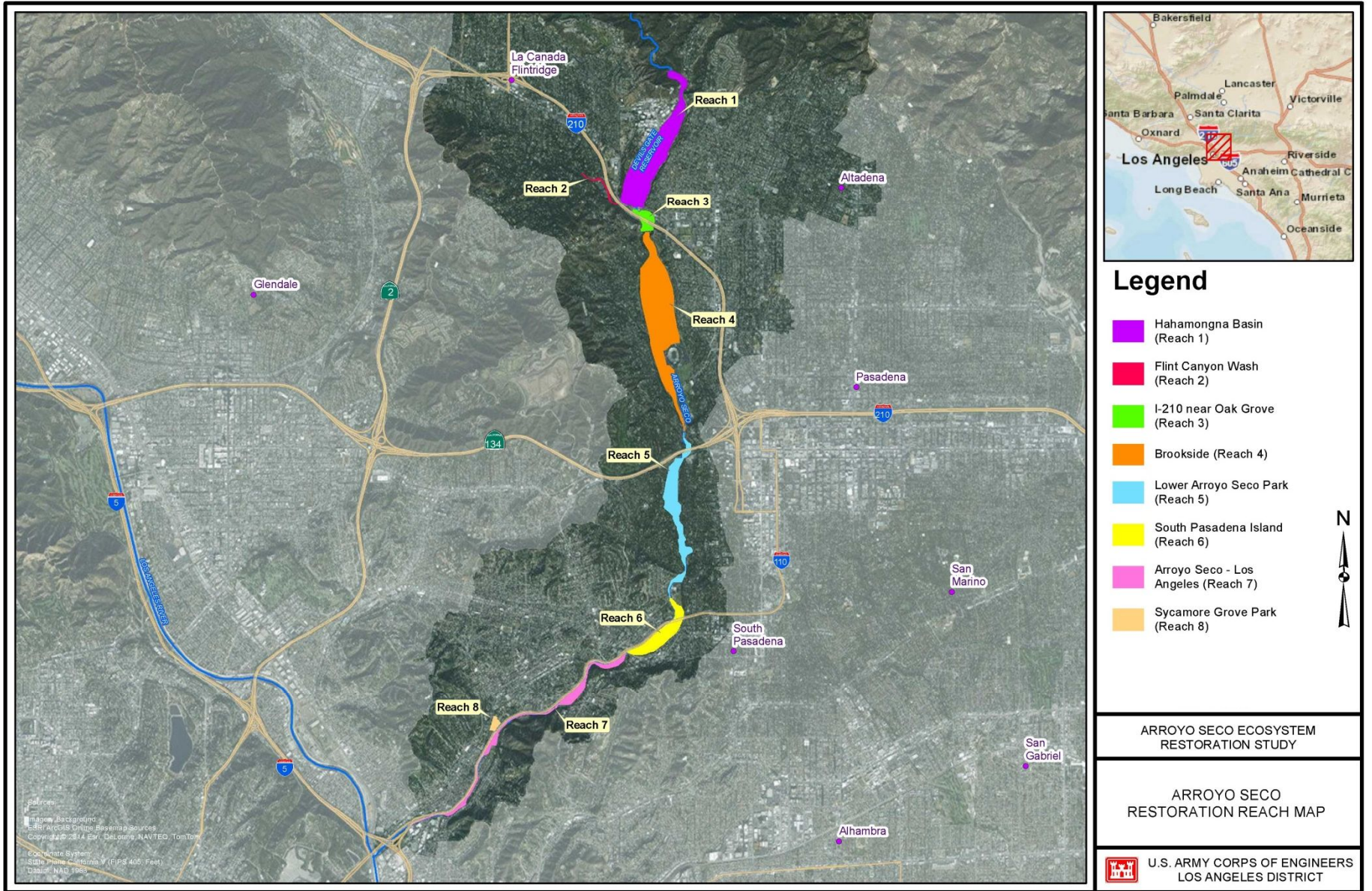


Plate 3

## 1. Introduction

The LACFCD and the Corps are proposing to study a plan for ecosystem restoration within 11 miles of the Arroyo Seco within the cities of La Canada-Flintridge, Pasadena, South Pasadena, Los Angeles, and an unincorporated area within Altadena in Los Angeles County, California. The FS/EIS/EIR will recommend a plan that will provide for long-term restoration for riparian and aquatic habitat while maintaining flood risk management. Additional benefits to the plan to be developed associated with recreation, improved water quality, and increased water conservation may be included.

## 2 Study Area

The Study area encompasses the lower portion of the Arroyo Seco that extends from the southern border of the Angeles National Forest (ANF) for approximately 11 miles downstream to approximately 0.5 miles from its confluence with the Los Angeles River. The downstream boundary of the Study area meets the border of the Corps' Los Angeles River Revitalization Study. Several major areas have also been identified based on previously identified sites, now reaches and characterized by use or by local jurisdiction and project interest. The reaches are shown in Figure 1, and include:

- Hahamongna basin (1.5 miles in length) at the foot of the mountains (Reach 1):
  - The Arroyo Seco is a natural channel in the Devil's Gate Dam reservoir. The area includes Hahamongna Watershed Park (HWP).
- Flint Canyon Wash (0.6 miles in length) (Reach 2)
- I-210 near Oak Grove Drive (0.3 miles in length) (Reach 3)
- Central Arroyo Seco (2.5 miles in length, which includes Brookside Park and the Rose Bowl) (Reach 4):
  - From the Devil's Gate Dam, the Arroyo Seco flows through a short natural canyon and is contained primarily in a trapezoidal concrete channel extending from the golf course to north of Seco Street. South of Seco Street, the Arroyo Seco transitions to a rectangular concrete channel, extending 750 feet south to the natural drainage channel passing under the Holly Street and the SR-134 bridges before continuing to the next reach.
- Pasadena's Lower Arroyo Seco (1.5 miles in length) (Reach 5):
  - This reach extends from the Colorado Street Bridge to the South Pasadena boundary just south of the SR-110 Bridge. At the Colorado Street Bridge, the natural Arroyo Seco drainage channel flows over a spillway back into the concrete channel. The channel is located in a narrow, highly urbanized canyon.

- South Pasadena/Los Angeles Arroyo Seco (5.5 miles in length) (Reaches 6, 7 & 8):
  - The Arroyo Seco channel is concrete-lined and located in a narrow, highly urbanized canyon to the confluence with the Los Angeles River.

These sites were identified based on:

- Consideration of the entire watershed
- Focus on major restoration opportunities and potential benefits
- Consider potential for connectivity and sustainability
- Avoid conflicts with planning constraints
- Consider input of the public and local agencies (incorporate outside expertise)

### **3. Proposed Project Description**

The Study proposes to identify a plan for opportunities for aquatic and riparian restoration along the Arroyo Seco. A range of alternatives will be analyzed in the EIR. In general, restoring these sites would encompass the range of conditions and features that existed at the Arroyo Seco historically, such as the following considerations.

- Riparian habitat.
- Tributary habitat providing access to higher points in the watershed.
- Water quality that can support native species.
- A large alluvial floodplain that offers wildlife habitat and flood attenuation and recreation and sediment control and groundwater recharge.

Proposed management actions under the plan would not be designed to restore the Arroyo Seco River to pre-settlement conditions. Rather, they would be designed to restore the natural functions that were once widespread within the watershed, and to address the overall reduction in habitat quality and water quality that is apparent throughout the lower watershed. Some of the proposed management actions would be relatively small in the context of the overall watershed, but if implemented would demonstrate the potential for improvement of habitat quality throughout the watershed. Others are anticipated to be more extensive and would result in fundamental changes in the way parts of the watershed are managed. Examples include eradicating invasive species and restoring native vegetation, partial or complete removal of the concrete lining of the stream, wetland restoration, floodplain reconnection, removal of revetments, creation of side channels, and conversion of turf to wetlands or swales.

#### **4. Study Objectives and Constraints**

Based on the problems and opportunities identified for the Arroyo Seco study area, the Corps, LACFCD, key agencies, and stakeholders have developed specific planning objectives to guide the formulation and evaluation of activities to be considered in the plan. These objectives are consistent with ongoing state and local efforts within the Arroyo Seco watershed.

- Restoration of a more natural hydrologic and hydraulic regime to increase diversity of natural habitats, connectivity between streambed/ instream habitat to river bank habitat (wetland marsh and riparian) to the floodplain.
- Increase linear connectivity (aquatic and riparian) between natural habitats in the San Gabriel Mountains (Angeles National Forest) and Arroyo Seco and the Los Angeles River
- Increase biodiversity of aquatic, wetland, and riparian habitats
- Improve passive recreation opportunities that are compatible with the restored environment in the Arroyo Seco.

Activities will be evaluated and compared to determine how well they meet the above ecosystem restoration objectives, and to what degree they result in restoration of a functioning, self-sustaining ecosystem within the study area.

Unlike planning objectives that represent desired positive changes, planning constraints represent restrictions that should not be violated. The planning constraints include:

- Maintain Flood Risk Management function/capability of the Arroyo Seco system.
- Maintain Devil's Gate Dam Flood Storage Capacity.
- Avoid Hazardous and Toxic Waste (HTW) Sites.
- Minimize adverse impacts to nearby residences, especially historic and culturally significant districts and properties
- Minimize impacts to existing facilities and infrastructure such as Rose Bowl

#### **5. Probable Environmental Effects of the Project**

The LACFCD is considering having the FS/EIS/EIR evaluate the following preliminary listing of potential environmental issues. The environmental issues to be addressed will be finalized after the close of the public comment period and comments on the NOP are received.

The EIR will focus on potential effects that could result from implementation of the activities identified in the FS/EIS/EIR for the proposed plan. The FS/EIS/EIR will assess the physical changes to the environment that would likely result from the construction and operation of restoration activities, including direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts. Potential impacts are summarized below. The FS/EIS/EIR will identify mitigation

measures if necessary to minimize potentially significant impacts of each alternative and measure.

### ***I. Aesthetics***

Potential direct and indirect impacts could occur both during construction and after the restoration activities under the plan are built and operating. Potential issues associated with aesthetics in relation to the proposed restoration measures could obstruct high-quality or important views of the landscape during either construction or operation of restoration measures. The FS/EIS/EIR will identify the potential visible physical changes to the natural and man-made environment, including the addition of new restoration measures into the viewshed (temporary and permanent) and the removal of other components from the view (i.e., blocking of views). The FS/EIS/EIR will also identify the potential effects of the proposed restoration measures on the existing light, glare, shadow, and shade environments.

### ***II. Agriculture and Forestry Resources***

The FS/EIS/EIR will evaluate the effects of construction and operation of restoration activities under the plan on agricultural and forestry resources.

### ***III. Air Quality***

Construction and operation of restoration activities under the plan could emit air emissions. The FS/EIS/EIR will evaluate the effects of construction and operational activities on air quality.

### ***IV. Biological Resources***

Construction and operation of the restoration activities could occur within exiting sensitive habitats. The projects could result in changes to wildlife habitat, disruption of natural movement corridors, fragmentation or isolation of wildlife habitats, and disturbance of sensitive species during construction or operation. In particular, reduced flows in downstream segments resulting from runoff retention could alter riparian and aquatic habitats. The FS/EIS/EIR will evaluate the potential for such facilities to impact biological resources and will also discuss local ordinances and state and federal regulations governing biological resources.

### ***V. Cultural Resources***

Construction and operation of the restoration activities under the plan could require construction of restoration measures both above and below ground. Issues regarding cultural resources during construction activities could include disturbance of known or unknown archeological sites, paleontological resources, and/or human remains where groundbreaking activities occur as well as disturbance or alteration of structures with historical importance. The FS/EIS/EIR will assess the potential effects of the proposed restoration activities on cultural resources, including archaeological, paleontological, and Native American resources.



## **VI. *Geology and Soils***

Southern Los Angeles County is a seismically active region. The construction and operation of the restoration activities under the plan could be subject to potential seismic and geologic hazards, including ground shaking, liquefaction, soil stability conditions, soil erosion rates, expansive soils, and landslides. The FS/EIS/EIR will assess the potential effects of the proposed restoration activities with respect to the geology and soils.

## **VII. *Greenhouse Gas Emissions***

Construction and operation of the restoration activities under the plan could generate greenhouse gas emissions. The FS/EIS/EIR will evaluate the effects of proposed restoration activities and activities on greenhouse gas emissions.

## **VIII. *Hazards and Hazardous Materials***

Excavation during construction of proposed restoration activities under the plan could uncover contaminated soils or hazardous substances that pose a substantial hazard to human health or the environment. Construction activities could result in the release of hazardous materials. The FS/EIS/EIR will evaluate the potential for restoration measures to result in the release of hazardous materials.

## **IX. *Hydrology and Water Quality***

Construction and operation of the proposed restoration activities under the plan may change local drainage patterns at construction sites, which could affect the volume and quality of surface runoff that in turn could affect local surface water resources. Considered cumulatively, the proposed restoration activities may also change regional drainage patterns, which could affect the hydrology, hydraulics, and water quality of streams and rivers. The FS/EIS/EIR will identify relevant federal, state, and local regulations and agencies, including provisions of the federal Clean Water Act, the state Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, and the permitting and regulatory authority of the RWQCB. The FS/EIS/EIR will identify storm water quality protection measures required during construction and operation of proposed facilities. The FS/EIS/EIR also will evaluate potential impacts to flood control capacity.

## **X. *Land Use and Planning***

Issues associated with land use and planning could result from construction and operation of the proposed restoration activities under the plan. Issues associated with these components could include compatibility with adjacent land uses or zoning designations, consistency with relevant land use policies, and access to adjacent land during new construction or repairs of existing flood control facilities. The FS/EIS/EIR will evaluate the compatibility of the proposed restoration activities with existing and planned land uses within the Arroyo Seco watershed.

## ***XI. Mineral Resources***

The FS/EIS/EIR will evaluate the effects of construction and operation of the proposed restoration activities under the plan on mineral resources.

## ***XII. Noise***

The FS/EIS/EIR will evaluate potential noise impacts to ensure that proposed restoration activities under the plan and implemented by local agencies comply with applicable local noise policies and ordinances.

## ***XIII. Population and Housing***

The FS/EIS/EIR will evaluate the proposed restoration activities impact on population and housing or induced growth. The FS/EIS/EIR will identify current population and employment projections and identify local planning jurisdictions with the authority to approve growth.

## ***XIV. Public Services***

Construction and operation of the proposed restoration activities under the plan is unlikely to affect demand for public services, or, by itself, to require new or expanded facilities for public service providers. However, the FS/EIS/EIR will assess the potential for the proposed restoration measures to affect police and fire protection services, schools, parks, and recreational facilities, such that new or expanded buildings or structures may be required that would, in turn, affect the environment.

## ***XV. Recreation***

The FS/EIS/EIR will evaluate the effects of construction and operation of the proposed restoration activities under the plan on recreation, including existing active and passive recreation within the study area.

## ***XVI. Transportation/Traffic***

Construction of the proposed restoration activities could affect traffic on local roadways as a result of vehicle trips associated with hauling of material and equipment, road closures and detours, increased demand for parking to serve construction workers, and increase in traffic hazards caused by construction activities. The FS/EIS/EIR will evaluate the potential for additional construction vehicles, lane closures, or road closures to impact traffic and circulation.

## ***XVII. Utilities and Service Systems***

Potential issues related to the construction and operation of the proposed restoration activities include the disruption or impediment of service to areas where the proposed restoration measures would be constructed or operated. Existing and projected regional supplies, demands, and facilities will be described along with any existing constraints, deficiencies, or service issues for the proposed restoration measures. The FS/EIS/EIR will evaluate the project's potential to affect utilities.

### ***XVIII. Mandatory Findings of Significance***

The FS/EIS/EIR will evaluate the proposed restoration activities under the plan for impacts to mandatory findings of significance areas as set forth in Appendix G of the State CEQA guidelines.