



The Corps of Engineers' vision of how the Arroyo Seco would look, from its confluence with the LA River to its beginning at in the San Gabriels, once it is restored to its natural state. The illustration looks north up the Arroyo Seco from where it meets the LA River.

Feds back efforts to restore Arroyo stream; City must engage

By THOMAS D. SEIFERT

Ever since the flood channel was constructed in the Lower Arroyo Seco stream after World War II, local residents have been clamoring for the restoration of more natural conditions. In the 1990s, low-flow streams were created on both sides of the flood channel, reestablishing some of the stream zone habitat.

The Lower Arroyo Master Plan, approved by the Pasadena City Council in 2003, stated:

“The 1988 Cal Poly Study recommended the removal of the flood control channel. To date, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works has not consented to the removal of any of its flood control channel systems within the Arroyo Seco.

However, with the initiation of the Arroyo Seco Watershed Feasibility Study, the Army Corps of Engineers Feasibility Study,

Opinion

and growing public interest in restoration of the Los Angeles River system, the County has reevaluated its position and is also very interested in considering the possibility of channel removal.”

Since then the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been making slow progress on its restoration study with a focus on the Lower Arroyo as one of the key elements.

The Corps study has the potential to bring in significant federal support for restoring a living stream in the Lower Arroyo.

Now with new support from the Obama Administration, the Corps is finally completing its study with the cooperation of local agencies, including LA County and the cities of Los Angeles, Pasadena, La Cañada Flintridge and South Pasadena. Pasadena, which stands to gain so much, however, seems

to be conspicuously absent in the planning process.

In January and February of this year meetings were held in Highland Park and Altadena where Arroyo Seco communities met to get the latest news and to share their ideas and ask their questions. Besides stream restoration, topics of interest included capturing groundwater, the arts, public open space, community development, education and the celebration of place.

The Corps schedule to complete the plan is:

- Spring 2015: alternative milestone
- Winter 2015: tentative selected plan
- Spring 2016: concurrent public, technical, policy and legal review
- Fall 2016: State and agency review
- Spring 2017: Army Corps final report

This is a historic opportunity for Pasadena and the Arroyo Seco. Let's not let it slip away.