

**MOTION**

HEALTH, EDUCATION, NEIGHBORHOOD,  
PARKS, ARTS & RIVER

The Los Angeles River is a resource and unique asset for the 51 miles it runs from the Western San Fernando Valley headwaters in Canoga Park to its mouth in Long Beach, including 32 miles within the City of Los Angeles. Numerous proposals for improving recreational and active transportation opportunities along the River have been proposed, including the City's LA River Master Plan with ambitious designs for new parks and amenities for communities. The investment of tens of millions of taxpayer dollars in river improvements is a worthwhile goal; however, to provide the best value to the public, these investments must be well-planned and include practical solutions to environmental and other hazards and nuisances that will prevent the river vision from being fully realized. Conditions that will prevent the public from taking advantage of river amenities include perception of unsafe conditions, including but not limited to: public safety, response to incidents in and along the River, lack of care for natural resources, maintenance, pollution, trash, and obstructions to biking and walking paths.

Current residents report significant problem areas along the LA River from Canoga Park to Reseda within the boundaries of Council District 3 including numerous locations where drug use, camping, obstructions of the bike path, hazardous waste, and—in the absence of restroom facilities—unsanitary conditions have become more common. Local community members have raised concerns that if design and oversight/enforcement are not improved now, the River will continue to decline and they intend to oppose future investments in parks and downstream improvements.

Recently drug and gang activity appears to have increased in the river area, resulting in at least one homicide.

Additionally, the use of the river paths and adjacent areas for habitation could potentially be the cause for increased bacterial loads on recreation zone days in the areas where water quality is regularly tested by LA Sanitation. For example, the concentration of E. coli in several areas of the Sepulveda Basin and Elysian Valley Recreation Zones suddenly increased fivefold over two days (from July 23 -25) creating temporary undesirable conditions of unsuitable water quality in each Recreation Zone for recreational activities which could be attributed to illegal dumping. Occurrences like this could be prevented in the future should there be an additional organized river program.

Rec Zones Water Quality

**2019 Recreation Zone Water Quality  
E. coli Concentration (MPN/100ML)**

Sepulveda Basin Recreation Zone					Elysian Valley Recreation Zone				
Sample Date	Sampling Stations			Status of Rec Zone	Sample Date	Sampling Stations			Sta Rec
	UPPER SEPULVEDA BASIN KAYAK ZONE	MIDDLE SEPULVEDA BASIN KAYAK ZONE	LOWER SEPULVEDA BASIN KAYAK ZONE			UPPER ELYSIAN VALLEY KAYAK ZONE	MIDDLE ELYSIAN VALLEY KAYAK ZONE	LOWER ELYSIAN VALLEY KAYAK ZONE	
7/25/2019	31	504	1085	OPEN (CAUTION)	7/25/2019	1350	160	160	OPEN (C)
7/23/2019	41	97	216	OPEN	7/23/2019	755	52	109	OPEN (C)
7/18/2019	63	85	31	OPEN	7/18/2019	173	41	135	OPEN (C)
7/16/2019	41	41	52	OPEN	7/16/2019	135	41	10	OPEN (C)
7/11/2019	98	98	52	OPEN	7/11/2019	805	31	68	OPEN (C)

2019 Rec Zones 2018 Rec Zones

Other Southern California governments have recently reached settlements or passed ordinances to better patrol their river areas, including an Orange County legal settlement which allows law enforcement to remove people living along the Santa Ana River after providing a reasonable time to remove their belongings and offering supportive services. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors recently passed a motion to reduce hazards

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caused by people dwelling in secluded areas such as riverbeds and high fire zones by increasing response, outreach and cleanup in high risk areas.

One complicating factor for public safety and enforcement, outreach, and cleanup along the Canoga Park, Winnetka and Reseda areas of the LA River is the multijurisdictional responsibility for different sections and the channel, paths, adjacent green space, underpasses, and access points. The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LACFCD), and various Los Angeles City departments (BOE, Recreation and Parks, LADOT, LAPD, LA Sanitation and others) all have responsibility for some aspect of river area maintenance and enforcement, but there is no one coordinating entity among them with primary responsibility for this Canoga Park to Reseda stretch of the LA River. The lack of a unified command contributes to the community's frustration that problems along the River are not addressed, are moved back and forth between areas of different jurisdictions, and are not likely to improve.

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) is a local government public entity established in 1985 pursuant to the Joint Powers Act as a partnership including the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, which is a state agency. The MRCA could take responsibility for the river environment in a pilot program to patrol the area, enforce relevant ordinances, ensure safety, assist with maintenance and operations, reduce hazards, offer interpretation and educational resources to the public, provide outreach to unsheltered individuals in the area, and ensure that the River is an amenity for the local community.

As a JPA agency whose Rangers are Sworn California Peace Officers with swift water, EMT, naturalist, and wildland firefighter training, MRCA can contract to work on all areas of the River regardless of which governmental entity has ownership for a particular area.

As a point of reference, the MRCA operates and manages the Los Angeles River Recreation Zones in the Elysian Valley and Sepulveda Basin Recreation Zones for the seventh season. This is an endeavor that began when the LA River was designated as a traditional navigable waterway in July 2010 by the US Environmental Protection Agency, which prompted the establishment of the River Recreation Zone (RRZ). The RRZ was developed in cooperation with the USACE, LA County, the City of Los Angeles and the MRCA as the managing agency responsible.

Although this offer has been extended and discussed for several years, other strategies have been prioritized for the River to address the various issues by City departments and others. Since the problems reported by the community have increased despite these other strategies, a pilot project to move forward with MRCA taking responsibility for the section of the River from Canoga Park through Reseda is warranted to determine if a unified command provides better value and service to address the needs for environmental and public safety and programming in the area.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Bureau of Engineering, Department of Recreation and Parks, Department of Transportation, Police Department, Bureau of Sanitation and other relevant city departments, including the Chief Legislative Analyst and City Attorney be directed to take the necessary steps to establish and fund a pilot program with MRCA for the section of the Los Angeles River in Council District 3 from the Canoga Park headwaters to Lindley Ave in Reseda to patrol the area, enforce relevant ordinances, ensure safety, reduce hazards, provide outreach to unsheltered individuals in the area, and ensure the River is an amenity for the local community

Presented by:

  
BOB BLUMENFELD  
Councilmember, 3<sup>rd</sup> District

Seconded by:



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