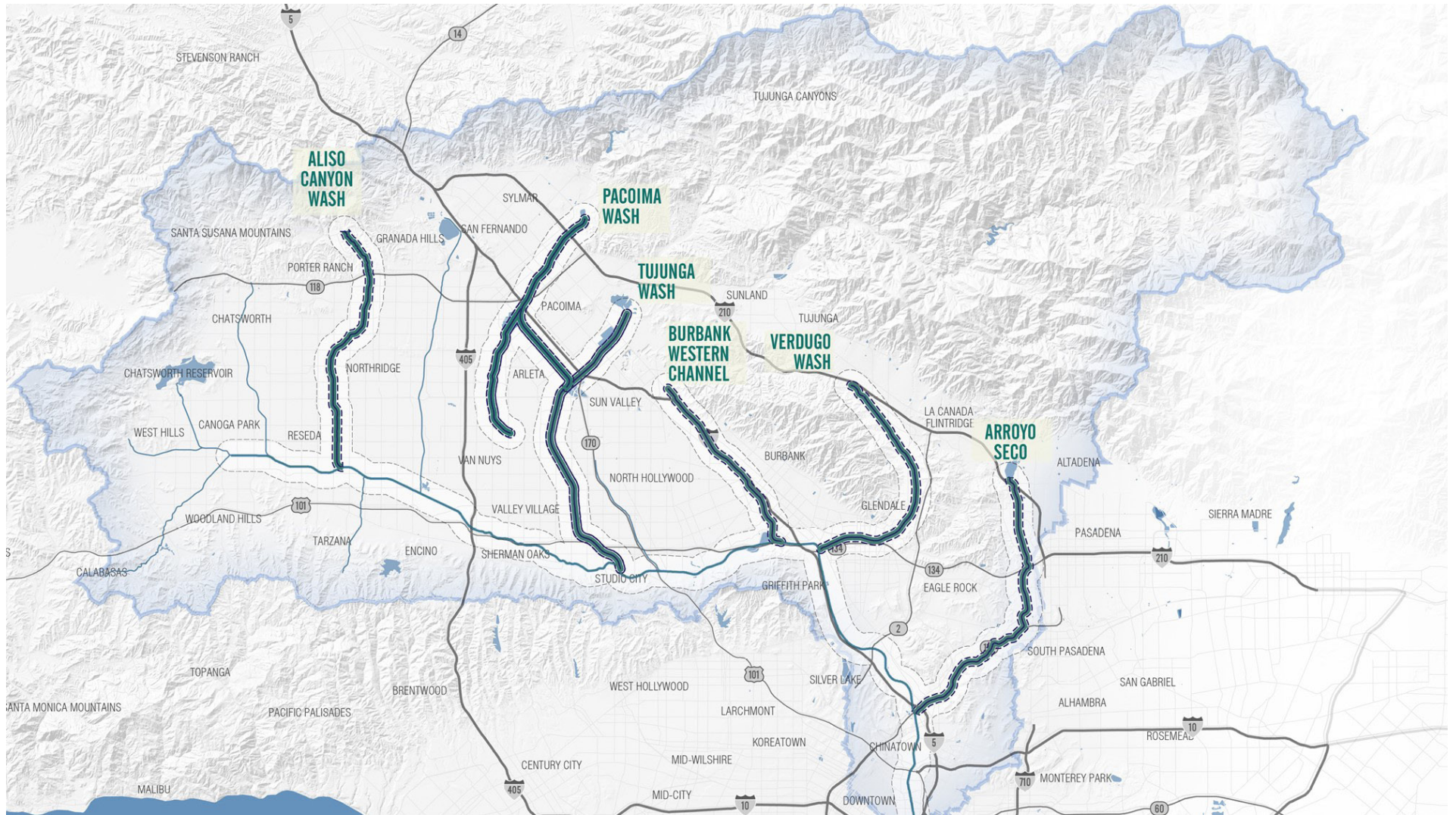






# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND STORY OF THE UPPER LA RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES

*The Plan* covers the Upper Los Angeles River and Tributaries (ULART) Watershed with a focus on the Aliso Canyon Wash, Pacoima Wash, Tujunga Wash, Burbank Western Channel, Verdugo Wash, and Arroyo Seco. The conditions within the ULART vary drastically between each tributary and from their headwaters to their confluences, and while many of the features of the tributaries are different, they have one major thing in common; they eventually converge with the Los Angeles River and impact the ecology, water quality, and flooding conditions downstream. In many of the previous planning efforts, the tributaries have been excluded from river planning, and are seldom examined based on their similarities; therefore, *the Plan* seeks to describe the conditions and attributes across the watershed, address the varied needs of the residents, and identify improvements to the landscape comprising the ULART.



The Upper LA River and 13 Tributaries

# OVERVIEW *of the ULART Existing Conditions*

The ULART Planning area consists of the entire LA River watershed feeding into the point where it meets the Lower Los Angeles River Revitalization Plan (more about that later) in the city of Vernon. This plan examines different situations and challenges on a few different levels depending on the need:

**Watershed:** All land whose rain-water drains to the point where the project area begins.

**Used for:** to determine the overall impact of the plan to improve issues that contribute to the overall health of the community and ecosystem in the planning area.

**Tributary Watershed:** All land whose rainwater drains to that tributary before reaching the Los Angeles River.

**Used for:** determining quantities of stormwater and pollutants for that particular area.

**Tributary Corridor:** ½ mile area on either side of the urbanized portion of the tributary.

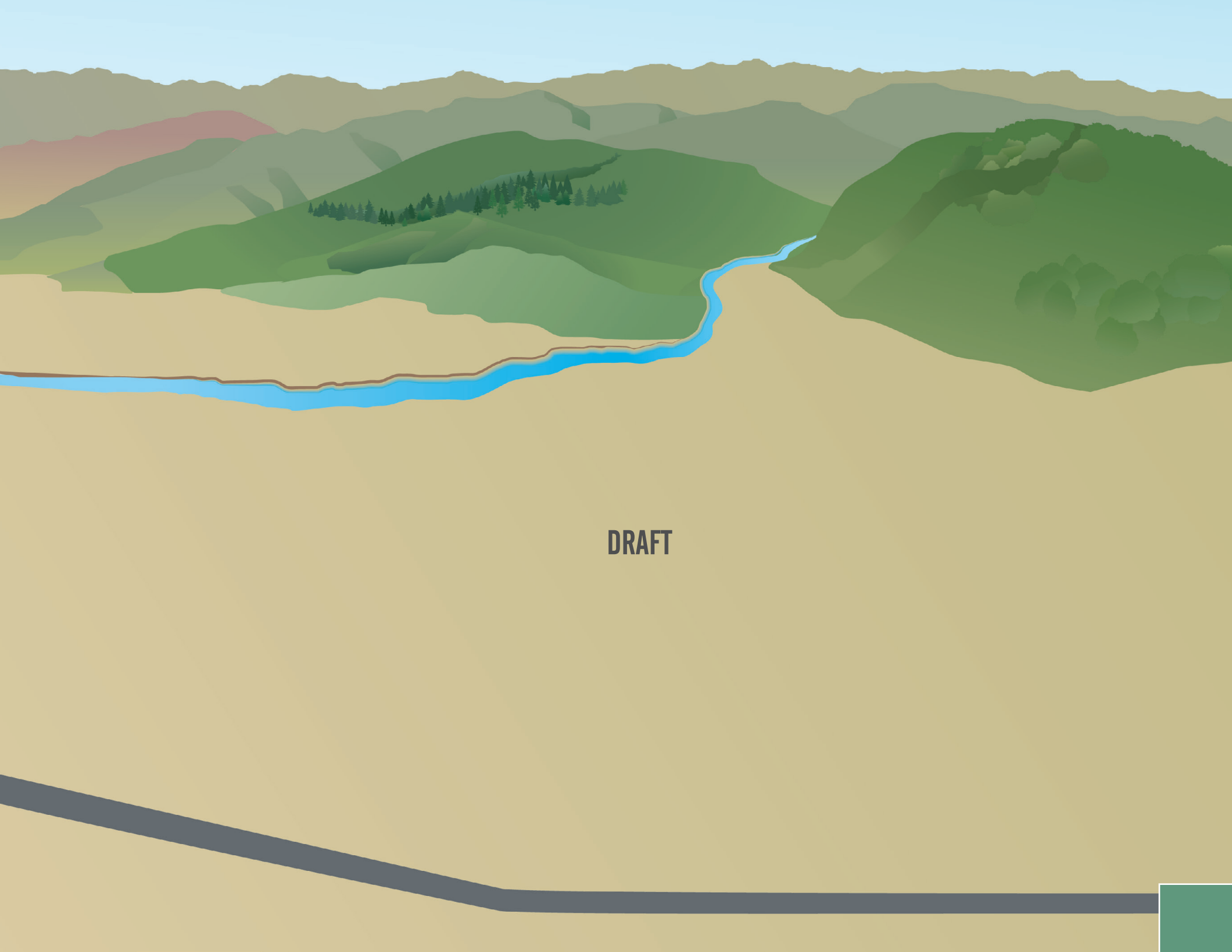
**Used for:** representing the areas, resources, and population within walking distance of the river.

The ULART watershed is unique because of its multiple types of land uses and land types throughout the area. The tributaries are for the most part single-purpose flood control channels. There is land for everything from forest to industrial to urban. Overall, the urbanized area is largely built out with little opportunities for new habitat or parkspace. In that same train of thought, the people who live within the watershed have varying levels of impact and use of the tributary. Oftentimes there is little awareness of the presence of the tributary and the potential uses of the tributary are only as a barrier to the other sides of their neighborhoods. But, these tributaries could function as so much more.





DRAFT



**DRAFT**

# HISTORY OF THE LA RIVER *with a Focus on the Upper Watershed and Tributaries*



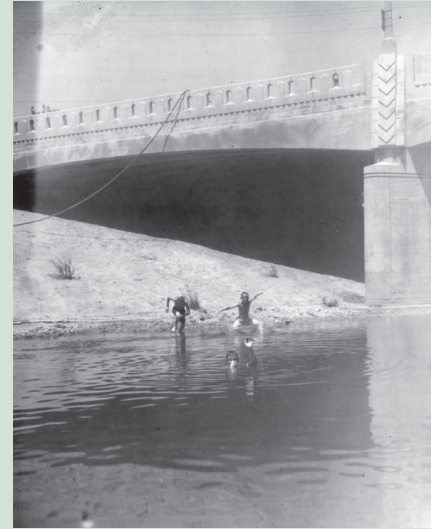
**1900:** Two men stand at the headwaters of the Los Angeles River

Gaspar de Portola and father Juan Crespi name the River

The first permanent Spanish settlement is established in San Diego and missions are established up the coast of present-day California<sup>1</sup>



**1937:** View of the Tujunga Wash in the San Fernando Valley before development



**1948:** Children swim under a bridge near Griffith Park



**1949:** Construction of channel walls for Valley Flood Control Plan

A massive flood cuts a new path south of the pueblo to San Pedro Bay

Development boom results in homes and businesses being built in the floodplain

City of Burbank is established<sup>5</sup>

City of Glendale is established<sup>6</sup>

Devil's Gate Dam is built<sup>9</sup>

5,000 B.C.E. –1700's

Tongva and Yangna Indian build villages along the River

1769

1781

El Pueblo de la Reina de Los Angeles is founded where Olvera Street now exists

City of Los Angeles is established<sup>2</sup>

1825

1850

California becomes part of the United States<sup>3</sup>

Los Angeles incorporated as a City

Mid 1800's

1886

City of Pasadena is incorporated<sup>4</sup>

1887

1914

Major flood causes widespread damage

1915

Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LACFCD) is established<sup>7</sup>

San Fernando Valley is annexed by the City of Los Angeles<sup>8</sup>

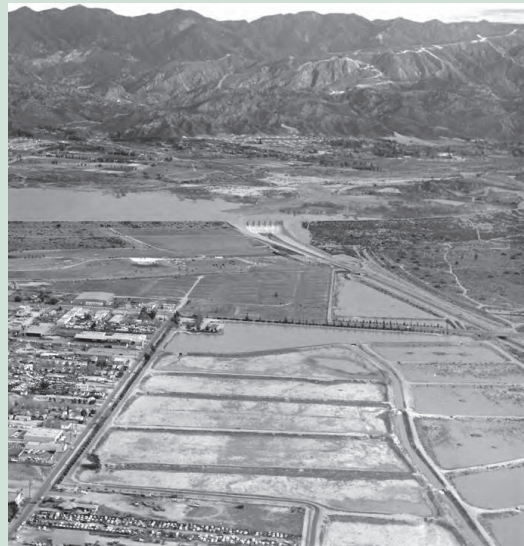
1920

1934

Massive flooding occurs, causes Congress to authorize concrete channels



**1954:** Motorists cross Pacoima Wash during a flood



**1966:** Aerial view of Hansen Dam and spreading basin



**1984:** Participant in the Great Wall Mural project indicates work

					Most devastating flood on record occurs	Hansen Dam is built <sup>13</sup>	Sepulveda Dam is completed	Mayor Tom Bradley establishes first task force on the River to look at potential River improvements	County receives open space assessment district funds to provide new River access through parks and bike trails	The City of Los Angeles adopted the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan	Seasonal LA River Recreation Zone opens			
	1935	1938	1940	1941	1960	1989	1990	1992	1997	2007	2010	2011	2015	
	Army Corps begins channelization	Los Angeles River is channelized, and the following channels are created <sup>10</sup> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Arroyo Seco (construction began in 1935)<sup>11</sup></li><li>● Aliso Canyon Wash</li><li>● Western Channel</li><li>● Pacoima Wash</li><li>● Tujunga Wash (1950s)<sup>12</sup></li><li>● Verdugo Wash (late 1930s)</li></ul>						County of Los Angeles River Task Force is formed and restoration efforts begin		Elysian Valley Gateway Park: First pocket park opened along LAR by SMMC/MRCA.		LAR deemed navigable water by EPA		Assembly Bill 466 (AB 466) adopted to establish the Lower Los Angeles River Working Group

# LITERATURE REVIEW PLANS

1. The California Resources Agency, San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (2001). *Common Ground - From the Mountains to the Sea*.
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3. City of Los Angeles Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering (2007). *Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan*
4. United States Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District (2015). *Los Angeles River Ecosystem Restoration Integrated Feasibility Report*
5. County of Los Angeles Public Health Community Health Services (2011). *Pacoima Wash Vision Plan*
6. City of San Fernando (2004). *Cal Poly Pomona Pacoima Wash Greenway Master Plan*
7. United States Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District, Los Angeles County Department of Public Works (Undated). *Arroyo Seco Watershed Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study*
8. Upper Los Angeles River Watershed Management Group (2016). *Enhanced Watershed Management Program (EWMP) for the Upper Los Angeles River Watershed*
9. Leadership Committee of the Greater Los Angeles County Integrated Regional Water Management Region (2014). *The Greater Los Angeles County Region Integrated Regional Water Management (GLAC IRWM) Upper Los Angeles River Subregional Report Plan*
10. The Nature Conservancy (2016). *Water Supply and Habitat Resiliency for a Future Los Angeles River: Site-Specific Natural Enhancement Opportunities Informed by River Flow and Watershed-Wide Action Los Feliz to Taylor*
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12. Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation (2016). *Los Angeles Countywide Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment*
13. The River Project (2008). *Tujunga-Pacoima Watershed Plan*
14. United States Department of Interior National Park Service (2016). *Rim of the Valley Corridor Special Resource Study*
15. California Coastal Conservancy (2002). *Arroyo Seco Watershed Restoration Feasibility Study*
16. Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, University of California Berkeley (2005). *The Los Angeles River Urban Wildlife Refuge*

## ULART CONTEXT IN LA RIVER WATERSHED PLANNING

In the last 20 years, there have been multiple planning efforts in the Los Angeles Region. Plan topics ranging from drinking water supply, bikeways, parks, and even safe routes to school. These plans are often “single purpose” and only consider a portion of the watershed or include minimal detail in some areas. *The Plan* seeks to explore the spaces in between the existing plans and tie together the related objectives for each of the planning efforts to develop an evenly distributed, equitable and multi-benefit approach to improve projects across the entire watershed.

(see Volume 2, Chapter A for full literature review).

Although the plans selected for the literature review cover a host of the typical multi-benefit ideals and concepts, they do not provide the same level of detail or cover the entire watershed. Limited data about the progress and implementation of these plans has been made available, with the Tujunga-Pacoima Watershed plan and the Los Angeles City Los Angeles River Revitalization Plan being the most transparent about the progress since their plans were released.

## ALL UPPER LA RIVER PLANS: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

There are over 114 planning documents developed for this project area according to the LA River Master Plan Update (more detail are provided later in this section<sup>1</sup>). Of those 114 planning documents, the ULART Literature review has only 16 plans that were most applicable

Lastly, planning documents have a “shelf life”, corresponding to the changing ecology, landscape, and communities they represent. Not all plans have aged as well as others; therefore, they were used in this plan primarily as references for identifying the known issues and interests of the community. *The Plan* seeks to continue the dialogue that began during these planning efforts amongst planners, NGOs, elected officials, agencies and local residents.

<sup>1</sup> <http://dpw.lacounty.gov/wmd/watershed/lar/docs/LARMP%20Steering%20Committee%20Meeting%201-%20Summary%20and%20Appendices.pdf>

## FAMILY OF PLANS

There are two plans closely related to this Plan. The first plan, the Lower Los Angeles River Revitalization Plan (LLARRP), was completed in 2017 and serves as the corresponding version of this plan for the lower portion of the Los Angeles River Watershed (available online at [www.lowerlariver.org](http://www.lowerlariver.org)). Both the LLARRP and ULART plans seek to unite the unique and diverse sociological, ecological, and political aspects of river planning in their region in a digestible and actionable manner. The two plans are meant to work in tandem; however, due to differences in the Working Groups and managing agencies, the decisions made regarding the best ways to represent these areas, the physical characteristics of the watersheds, the historical land uses,

and the socio-economic conditions are also different. Both plans are formatted in a similar way and include the same tools for project implementation; however, the recommended methods for this process differs between the two planning efforts (See chapter 4 for additional details). The second related plan is the Los Angeles River Master Plan Update, to be released in 2020 (Master Plan Update; materials available online at [www.larivermasterplan.org](http://www.larivermasterplan.org)). The Master Plan Update has a similar process structure with steering committees, public outreach and engagement, public meetings and all materials posted online to create a more transparent process. This plan covers all 51 miles of the LA River, sometimes referred to as the mainstem.

