



## RESOLUTION

### SUPPORTING THE RE-ENVISIONING OF THE SEPULVEDA BASIN

WHEREAS, the Sepulveda Basin encompasses over 2,000 acres of federally owned land and nearly eight miles of Los Angeles river and tributaries, and affords unparalleled opportunities to demonstrate large-scale and forward-thinking restoration implementing nature-based solutions;

WHEREAS, residents of Los Angeles and the State of California are facing unprecedented challenges posed by the effects of climate change—including record-breaking temperatures, shrinking snowpacks and reservoirs, drought, floods, and an increasing number of wildfires;

WHEREAS, faced with the impacts of climate change, we can and must increase our efforts to unite in protecting the natural world we depend on and incorporating principles of stewardship into our laws, policies, and individual lives;

WHEREAS, historically, the Los Angeles River and its watershed have supported abundant ecosystems, making the area a biodiversity “hotspot”;

WHEREAS, a nature-based approach connecting water decisions to land use and climate change will secure a healthier future for ourselves and our children;

WHEREAS, conservation of water, floodplain reclamation, watershed restoration, and aquifer recharge would create new and much-needed safeguards (as outlined in The River Project’s [Sepulveda Basin Restoration Feasibility Study](#)) for our communities, cities, and state;

WHEREAS, a broad spectrum of support from federal, state, county, and city agencies would provide a cohesive plan—as opposed to an *ad hoc* approach—to restore the Los Angeles River and its tributaries in the Sepulveda Basin to their natural flow; and

WHEREAS, reconfiguration of the Sepulveda Basin will provide a new urban model for other cities across the country and around the world, and therefore,

**IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED THAT WE CHAMPION THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:**

1. Convert the Sepulveda Basin into a climate-adaptive “central” park for San Fernando Valley residents.
2. Improve and expand access to the 2,000-acre parkland and its amenities for the surrounding communities, especially for disadvantaged communities (DAC).

3. Employ nature-based solutions to mitigate climate change and restore ecosystem functions to the Los Angeles River and tributaries in the Sepulveda Basin.
4. Optimize groundwater recharge to maximize local water supplies and buffer against periods of drought.
5. Increase detention capacity to reduce flood risk for downstream and surrounding communities.
6. Protect and expand wildlife habitat and biodiversity within the Sepulveda Basin.
7. Incorporate indigenous stewardship principles into the laws and policies governing the Sepulveda Basin's development.
8. Incorporate environmental justice principles and practices to protect the affordability and social fabric of surrounding communities.
9. Build a strong community-based coalition that ensures design decisions positively impact water, land use, and climate change.
10. Build on The River Project's work to "[Reimagine the Sepulveda Basin](#)."

**SIGNED as of 12/12/22:**

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It's Overdue

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Dennis Yong, Advisor/Instructor  
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George Waddell, volunteer  
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Bill Nye

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Rick Cole  
\* Congress for the New Urbanism

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\*For identification purposes only

## BACKGROUND

The modern history of Los Angeles is a story of burgeoning population growth and rapid physical expansion along the river. Like other rivers throughout the state and the West, the Los Angeles River's flow varies substantially over the course of a year due to a rainy season that is short yet sometimes intense. This reality has always caused surges in the river flow and sporadic flooding. The river drops 800 feet in its 50-mile journey from the mountains to the ocean; after rains and snowfalls, the waters naturally rush down toward the sea.

Historically, the river's floodplains served to reabsorb the floodwaters, return water to the soils, recharge groundwaters, and thereby support diverse ecosystems including vegetation that provided shade and cooled the air. As the riverside was developed, elimination of the floodplains exacerbated flood intensity.

Thus, the river's natural surges were perceived as a dire threat which must be averted. Here, as elsewhere across the nation, governments responded by combatting flooding with concrete barriers. Flood channels and culverts contained and confined the river and its tributaries to a drainage system, engineered to speed precious water quickly away to the sea, separating water from earth. For decades, these flood mitigations concealed the river's very existence. Some, however, advocated for the river's restoration.

In 1927, Los Angeles commissioned a study and proposed plan, which was prepared by the Olmsted Brothers and Harland Bartholomew & Associates. Their report, since described as "exquisite, wise, and farsighted," advocated for creating room for the river and a more livable Los Angeles—for all—through the creation of a riverside "emerald necklace" of public parklands and pathways, which would allow for seasonal river overflow and also provide multiple recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

That plan was shelved because of political concerns about its size and cost. Unforgotten to this day, the plan still persists inspiring river restoration efforts. Much can and should be done to further this ongoing effort. Today, even the US Army Corps of Engineers has begun to incorporate natural systems into their projects, with their Engineering with Nature program and their International Guidelines on Natural and Nature-Based Features for Flood Risk Management.

Scientific and philosophical understanding shows that humans have a deep dependence on the natural world and all its life forms. For that reason, it is critical to employ nature-based solutions in the development of the Sepulveda Basin. According to the United Nations, we cannot live in harmony with one another until we live in harmony with Nature.