

## Communication from Public

**Name:** Diana Weynand  
**Date Submitted:** 02/15/2023 12:58 PM  
**Council File No:** 23-0105

**Comments for Public Posting:** As chair of the Climate Reality Project, San Fernando Valley chapter, and representative of the Sepulveda Basin Coalition of over 80 orgs and environmental orgs, I cannot stress enough how important this motion is to the City of Los Angeles. Restoring this 2,000-acre area of Federally owned land, using natural solutions, will indeed be a complex project. It is essential that all future work be aligned with not just city recreational needs and usage, but with state agencies' mandates for nature-based solution projects and goals. Also, the US Army Corps of Engineers "Engineering with Nature" division should be a primary partner and resource in this work. We need good solutions to mitigate climate change in Los Angeles, and especially in the San Fernando Valley, which is growing hotter each year. Restoring the Sepulveda Basin using natural solutions, including returning the 8-mile stretch of the LA River to its natural flow, could have a significant and beneficial impact. It could increase storm surge protection and reduce flood risk, expand ground water recharge, and increase biodiversity. What is essential, however, is for the restoration work to begin with and be based on foundational changes in the basin and water flow. Adding native plants and increasing biodiversity are great steps, but they are not the first steps. This needs to be ground or bottom up work. Not top down. A naturally restored Sepulveda Basin could be an emerald gem for the entire City. And it chart a path for other urban areas throughout the state. But this work must be started soon. We don't have 25 years, as some plans are suggesting, to turn its potential into reality. Attached is the Sepulveda Basin Resolution (cited in this Motion), which is signed by a coalition of over 80 community and environmental organizations. Thank you.



## 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:**

Diana Weynand, Chapter Chair  
Climate Reality Project: San Fernando Valley

Candice Dickens-Russell, Executive Director  
Friends of the Los Angeles River

Jack Eidt, Co-Founder  
SoCal 350 Climate Action

Lisa Hart, Board Member  
Neighborhood Council Sustainability Alliance

Elizabeth Reid-Wainscoat, Urban Wildlands  
Center for Biological Diversity

Clark Stevens, Executive Director  
RCD of the Santa Monica Mountains

Cody O'Neill, Co-Lead  
Citizens Climate Lobby: SF Valley

Tony Tucci, Chair  
Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife (CLAW)

Esperanza Vielma, Executive Director  
Environmental Justice Coalition for Water

Katheryn Eller Barton, President  
San Fernando Valley Audubon Society

Grant Wilson, Executive Director  
Earth Law Center

Bonnie Ellman, Executive Committee  
San Fernando Valley Indivisible

Ryan Pryor, Pastor  
Mission Hills Christian Church

Teresa Brady, SFV Conservation Chair  
Sierra Club

Nurit Katz, Chief Sustainability Officer  
UCLA Sustainability

Kevin Patel, Founder & Executive Director  
One Up Action

Luke Ginger, Water Quality Scientist  
Heal the Bay

Shelley Billick, Chair  
LA Community Forestry Advisory Committee

Janet Cox, President  
Climate Action California

Steve Hochman, Owner  
Solar Hawk Renewable Solutions

Eric Gill, Member  
Extinction Rebellion Los Angeles

Keya Chaudhuri, Coordinator  
Extinction Rebellion Youth Los Angeles

Mark Kenyon, Executive Director  
North East Trees, Inc.

Janey Robinson, Co-Leader  
Indivisible Media City

Miles H. Lewis, Owner  
Valley Art Workshop

Jessica Hall, Restoration & Policy Director  
California Urban Streams Partnership

James Fischer, Policy Coordinator  
Climate Reality California Coalition

Deborah Murphy, Board Vice-Chair  
Los Angeles Walks

Suju Vijayan, Co-Leader  
East Valley Indivisibles

Susan Yank, Executive Director  
Clockshop

Travis Longcore, President  
Los Angeles Audubon Society

Jon Tsuchiyama, Owner  
West Valley Nursery

Antoinette Scully, Founder  
Valley Justice Coalition

Kristy Drutman, Founder  
Brown Girl Green

Addy Gonzales, Co-Director  
11:11 Projects

Rhonda Plank-Richard, Co-Leader  
Emerson UU Church Env. Justice Ministry

Tyler Tutak, President & Founder  
Blooming Buddies Garden Club

Aaron Van Voorhis, Pastor  
Central Avenue Church

Sim Bilal, Lead  
Youth Climate Strike LA

Michael Schneider, CEO  
Streets For All

Deanna Armbruster, Executive Director  
Santa Monica Mountains Fund

Claire Bloom, Executive Director  
Tarzana Community & Cultural Center

Jamie Perlman, LA County Circle  
Dayenu: A Jewish Call to Climate Action

Daniel Tamm, Board Chair  
Interfaith Solidarity Network

Conner Everts, Director  
Southern California Watershed Alliance

Alan Weiner, Chapter Lead  
350 Conejo/ San Fernando Valley

Jenna Didier, Executive Director  
LA River Public Art Project

Sienna Guzman, Leader  
Swing Left West Valley

Dan Silver, Executive Director  
Endangered Habitats League

Jasmin Vargas, Senior Organizer  
Food & Water Watch

Nicholas Gardner Serna, Political Lead  
Sunrise Movement LA

Katherine Tattersfield, Organizer  
West Valley People's Alliance

Tim Brick, Managing Director  
Arroyo Seco Foundation

Cher Gilmore, Group Leader  
Citizens Climate Lobby Santa Clarita Chapter

Maxwell Suwaki, CEO  
It's Overdue

Monica Campagna, Steering Member  
Glendale Environmental Coalition

Andy Hattala, Co-Chair  
Climate Reality Project, Greater Los Angeles

Keith Park, President  
California Garden & Landscape History Society

Amy Woodson-Boulton  
Indivisible West Side LA

Lindsay Sturman, Co-founder  
Liveable Communities Initiative

Shona Ganguly, Assoc. Dir. SoCal External Affairs  
The Nature Conservancy

Shayan Moshtael, President  
Associated Students CSUN

Sam Miyamoto, Founder  
GreenHacks

Dennis Yong, Advisor/Instructor  
Eco Chicos

Kim Lewand-Martin, Founder  
Everyday Eco-Habits for Everyday People

George Waddell, volunteer  
Sepulveda Basin Weeders Group

Antonio Sanchez, Nursery Manager  
Sanchez Horticulture

DJ Frank, President  
Reseda Neighborhood Council

Erin Coutts, Executive Director  
Los Angeles Regional Climate Collaborative

Melanie Winter, Founder & Director  
The River Project

Bill Nye

Ed Begley, Jr.

Rick Cole  
\* Congress for the New Urbanism

Dr. J. Pablo Ortiz-Partida  
\* Union of Concerned Scientists

Samantha M. Johnson, Land Return Coordinator  
\* Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Land Conservancy

\*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.

## Communication from Public

**Name:** Kimberly Durden  
**Date Submitted:** 02/15/2023 07:19 PM  
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**Comments for Public Posting:** I support nature-based solutions for the Sepulveda Basin Recreation Area.