



Memo

Date: March 14, 2019
To: State Coastal Conservancy Board
From: Sam Schuchat, Executive Officer
Greg Gauthier, Coastal Project Development Specialist
CC: Oversight Members
RE: Santa Ana River Conservancy Program

In 2014, through Senate Bill 1390, the California state legislature created the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program within the State Coastal Conservancy (Conservancy). The program addresses the resource and recreational goals of the Santa Ana River region including open space, trails, wildlife habitat, agricultural land protection, water quality protection, educational use, and public access. This memo provides an update on the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program funding and accomplishments.

The Santa Ana River is the largest watershed in Southern California, draining a 2,650 square mile area from its headwaters near the San Gorgonio Wilderness Area in the San Bernardino Mountains down to the Pacific Ocean. Flowing nearly 100 miles, the Santa Ana River runs through wild lands, agriculture, parks, towns, and cities. The river passes through San Bernardino, Riverside and Orange counties with nearly 7.5 million residents within its watershed. The Santa Ana River Conservancy Program is authorized to work within one half mile of either side of the Santa Ana River and its tributaries.

FUNDING

The Conservancy has been allocated \$66 million in funding for the Santa Ana River since 2006. This includes \$45 million from The Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Prop 84), \$16 million from the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (Prop 68), and \$5 million from the Fiscal Year 2018/2019 General Fund.

Approximately half of the Prop 84 funds have been spent or are in active grant agreements, and the remaining funds are allocated for trail projects in development. No funds from Prop 68 for the Santa Ana River have been appropriated as of FY 2018/2019. The FY 2018/2019 General Fund appropriation is for projects within the Santa Ana River Parkway. Staff anticipates bringing a suite of projects to the Conservancy for approval in the summer of 2019 for funding from the General Fund.

PROP 84 FUNDING TABLE

PROP 84	ORANGE	RIVERSIDE	SANBERNARDINO	SHARED
\$45 Million Total	\$10 million	\$10 million	\$10 million	\$15 million
Spent/In Contract	\$3.7 million	\$5 million	\$5.5 million	\$5.5 million
Balance	\$6.3 million	\$5 million	\$4.5 million	\$9.5 million

SANTA ANA RIVER TRAIL

Completion of the Santa Ana River Trail remains the top priority for the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program. Designated a National Recreation Trail in 1977, the Santa Ana River Trail has been under development for more than 40 years. Once completed, the Trail will extend over 100 miles from the San Bernardino Mountains westward to the coast. It will be one of the longest urban recreation and river parkways in the United States, serving pedestrians, cyclists, commuters, and equestrians.

With 3 miles of trail to left to complete in Orange County, 12 miles in Riverside County and 8 miles in San Bernardino County, just 23 miles of trail remain to be completed. Of these remaining miles all but 3 miles are in design or construction phases.

SANTA ANA RIVER PARKWAY AND OPEN SPACE PLAN

The Coastal Conservancy approved the *Santa Ana River Parkway and Open Space Plan (SARP&OSP)* on May 24, 2018. The *SARP&OSP* builds on the success of the Santa Ana River Trail by defining a vision for expanding the river’s reach beyond the existing trail. The *SARP&OSP* identifies opportunities for recreation, education, greening, aesthetic improvement, and wildlife habitat along the corridor of the river and in parts of the river channel that can be improved without infringing on water quality, water supply, or necessary flood control. This planning process involved regional stakeholders and the public in developing a shared vision for the Santa Ana River Trail and Parkway.

The *SARP&OSP* is being adopted by cities and agencies along the Santa Ana River as well as being incorporated into general plans and other planning documents as these are updated over the course of the next years. Most notably, the *SARP&OSP* was incorporated as an appendix into the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority’s newly-updated *One Water One Watershed Plan (OWOW)* in January 2019.

The *SARP&OSP* will be presented by Conservancy staff and the project planning team at the April 2019 California Trails and Greenways Conference as a model for multi-jurisdictional planning in a session titled *Santa Ana River Parkway: A Case Study of Multi-Jurisdictional Trail Planning*.

PARKWAY PROJECTS

More than 150 potential Parkway projects were identified through the process of developing the *SARP&OSP*. These projects include trail connections and amenities such as equestrian facilities, staging areas, parking lots, and restrooms; new parks and existing parks improvements; river access opportunities; habitat and wildlife restoration; and education and interpretations opportunities. All of these projects were initially evaluated in terms of location suitability, proximity to the river, project readiness, and the potential for the project to support the goals of the *SARP&OSP*. The *SARP&OSP* also includes metrics and tools for evaluating new projects so that the plan can be updated on a regular basis to remain current and relevant.