

NEWS CLIPS

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Resource Conservation and Public Outreach

Organized by date

GREAT READ DROUGHT YIELDS ONLY DESPERATION

By **DIANA MARCUM**

MAY 30, 2014, 3:00 AM | REPORTING FROM HURON, CALIF.

The two fieldworkers scraped hoes over weeds that weren't there.

"Let us pretend we see many weeds," Francisco Galvez told his friend Rafael. That way, maybe they'd get a full week's work.

They always tried to get jobs together. Rafael, the older man, had a truck. Galvez spoke English. And they liked each other's jokes.

But this was the first time in a month, together or alone, that they'd found work.

They were two men in a field where there should have been two crews of 20. A farmer had gambled on planting drought-resistant garbanzo beans where there was no longer enough water for tomatoes or onions. Judging by the garbanzo plants' blond edges, it was a losing bet.

Galvez, 35, said his dream is to work every day until he is too bent and worn, then live a little longer and play with his grandchildren. He wants to buy his children shoes when they need them. His oldest son needed a pair now.

Most of all, he wants to stay put.

But the slowly unfurling disaster of California's drought is catching up to him. Each day more families are leaving for Salinas, Arizona, Washington — anywhere they heard there were jobs.

Even in years when rain falls and the Sierra mountains hold a snowpack that will water almonds and onions, cattle and cantaloupes, Huron's population swells and withers with the season.

These days in Huron — and Mendota and Wasco and Firebagh and all the other farmworker communities on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley — even the permanent populations are packing up.

"The house across the street from us — they all left yesterday," Galvez said. "Maybe this town won't be here anymore?"

Since the days of the Dust Bowl, these have been the places where trouble hits first and money doesn't last.

Before the drought moved into Year Three, Galvez paid the rent and bought his children school supplies. When he left for the fields, his wife, Maya, would send him off with a lunch of tortillas and beans and fruit. It was late afternoon on this April day. He hadn't eaten since the night before.

He was more than a month behind on his \$850-a-month rent, but his landlord had agreed to let him pay a little each week.

The month before, when Maya told him she was pregnant, she apologized.

"She told me she is worried for me because there is no work," he said. "But I told her, 'A baby is a happy thing. Don't worry, we'll handle it. I will try. I will do my best.'"

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Galvez's house is ranch-style, three bedrooms. There's a prancing Chihuahua named Mommy and a crate of oranges in the corner — a farmer gave Galvez permission to gather fruit on the ground.

The walls are freshly painted and hung with school class photos and a calendar with scenes of Yosemite and scripture. But some windows are cracked and there's almost no furniture.

The people who broke in on the same day Galvez learned his wife was pregnant took everything, even the beds. They left one wooden chair.

The neighbors across the street brought over a big-screen TV and a soft chair. Galvez borrowed money from his brother in Texas to fix the largest window. His brother, he said, is the type of person who expects to be paid back promptly.

The garbanzo field yielded two days of work. It was now two weeks later and Galvez hadn't found any other jobs. He said the fields are his only choice. In Oaxaca, he left school after fourth grade to work. He's been in California since he was 17, but he is not a U.S. citizen.

Rafael, a man who has worked under many last names, knows a lot of contractors and used to be able to line up work ahead of time.

But now, in the early mornings, long before sunrise, they go to the parking lot in front of the panaderia where they can no longer afford to buy Mexican sweetbread and coffee. They wait with other day laborers for a contractor to drive up and bark an offer.

The week before the going rate was \$8 an hour, minus \$8 to \$12 a day for a ride in the van to fields 45 minutes away. So many people have fled town that farmers were hurting for workers and the offer on this day had gone up to \$8.50 an hour. Still, Galvez hadn't been hired. He went home when he wanted to be working.

His two youngest girls, a tangle of giggles, played leapfrog in the empty living room. Manuel, 16, the oldest of six children, was in his room studying.

Galvez is proud of Manuel for avoiding the streets.

"He comes straight home from school. He works out, watches TV and stays inside. He wants to join the Navy someday," Galvez said. "I tell the other ones, 'Be like your brother.'"

Shyly, lowering his head, Galvez recalled that recently Manuel gave him a playful punch in the arm and they tussled the way they did when his son was small.

"He told me he was proud of me. He told me he wanted to be like me," Galvez said. "I said, 'I don't want you to be like me. You have to be better than me.'"

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By late April, the air held the warmth of growing season.

Water flowed in concrete canals. Precisely set sprinklers sent their spray ch-ch-ch-ing over fields. A high school runner in red shorts stood out against miles of blue-green onion fields.

The illusion of lushness was there. But without the rains, even California's vast system of buying, selling, pumping and moving trillions of gallons of water from the Sacramento Delta to this dry, clay-bottom plain — even pumping so much groundwater that parts of the Central Valley sink a foot a year — wasn't enough to keep Huron working.

The main drag was as sleepy as the stray dogs napping in every shady doorway. Two men in cowboy hats gossiped on a bench. A daily afternoon poker game was languidly being played in a window booth at a near-empty cafe.

"Only for fun, no money," the waitress said, though there were clearly stacks of bills on the table.

Huron already whispered of the ghost town it could soon be: It has a \$2-million deficit. Only about 1,000 people in a town with a permanent population of 7,000 are registered to vote, and of those, only some 200 actually do. No one has declared for the two open City Council seats — including the incumbents. Each week at school, Galvez's children have fewer classmates.

Antonio Chavarrias, a fieldworker, said the drought is different from other natural disasters because it doesn't end.

This is the third year of drought but, he said, just the beginning of the hardships.

"It's going to get worse," he said. "They're not planting. Think what it will be like at harvest."

Chavarrias came from El Salvador, where, he said, people make \$6 for five hours of work. He supports a 22-year-old daughter and a 20-year-old son going to college there.

"They're in my heart," he said. He hasn't seen them in 10 years.

Galvez is determined that the one sacrifice he won't make for his family is leaving them.

Once before when times were hard, he went alone to Texas to work. He was gone more than three years.

There was another man. He almost lost his wife.

"I lose time with the children. I lose everything," he said. "I don't want to do it again."

But if they stay, he doesn't have work. The family now owed almost two months' back rent.

"It's breaking my head, wondering what are we going to do, what are we going to do?" he said.

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Mormons were at Galvez's house — two blond, Spanish-speaking women from Utah who had been coming weekly.

Down the street, a man in a crisp plaid shirt was walking around in the heat, shaking hands and introducing himself to everyone he passed. He was an evangelical pastor from Lemoore.

The drought is bringing a lot of religion to Huron. Ministers walk the streets; bars notorious for violence and prostitution are empty.

"We've been having less problems downtown," said Police Chief George Turegano, a retired Capitola officer. "People have less money in their pocket. They're saving it to move to the next town, the next job."

When Turegano took the job two years ago — the 10th police chief in about as many years — he told his friends in law enforcement that Huron was like the Wild West.

"Not too many bedroom communities have the level of nightly shootings, prostitution and domestic abuse as these small Westside towns," he said. "But it's calmer lately."

At Galvez's house the lead missionary was encouraging Galvez's middle daughter, 12-year-old Dianey, in prayer.

"Just say what's in your heart," she told her.

Dianey haltingly gave thanks for waking up in the morning, and that her grandmother hadn't been sick lately. She didn't pray for rain as numerous signs across the Central Valley suggest.

Galvez, who was raised Catholic, has been going to several different churches.

"I like what they say. They all say the same thing: 'If your mind is right you can talk to God and he will tell you what to do,'" he said.

"I still have to learn how to make my mind right."

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In May, a season when Huron's population once doubled with workers planting and picking, Galvez had found three days of work in two weeks.

The family was down to the amount of his last check: \$256. They had stocked up on huge bags of beans and rice. The Mormon missionaries had brought misshapen cupcakes, the cake not reaching to the top of the cups and canned chocolate frosting three times higher. Two family friends had brought over bags of sweet breads and cilantro from their garden.

Galvez and Maya called a family meeting. Galvez said they told the children they would probably be moving to Texas soon.

The 15-year-old, Itzel, said no, she had a boyfriend. The 11-year-old, Francisco, said no, he liked his school. The oldest son, Manuel, said not a word. He only put a hand on his father's shoulder.

diana.marcum@latimes.com

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In a third year of California's drought, farmworkers such as Hector Ramirez are lucky to find a few days of work a month in the San Joaquin Valley, where fields lie dry and devastated. (Michael Robinson Chavez / Los Angeles Times)

LA Times 5/30/2014

Editorial How green can L.A. and its river be?



The Army Corps of Engineers has decided to recommend approval of a \$1-billion plan to revitalize an 11-mile stretch of the Los Angeles River. (Jae C. Hong / Associated Press)

By **TIMES EDITORIAL BOARD**

MAY 30, 2014

The decision by the Army Corps of Engineers to proceed with a more expansive remake of a stretch of Los Angeles River creates a historic opportunity: It allows the city to reorient itself away from 20th century development patterns and toward a greener and more habitable urban future.

As The Times reported Wednesday, the Army Corps has thrown its weight behind the most ambitious of several alternatives for the river. Final approval rests with Congress.

There was no doubt that the Army Corps was on board with at least some kind of project to revitalize the 11-mile stretch known as the Glendale Narrows. But it was leaning for a while toward a limited alternative that would have kept the river physically separated from the adjacent neighborhoods.

Instead, the project will bind green space and urban life, the San Fernando Valley and the Central City, the past and the future. The larger scope follows an intensive lobbying campaign by Mayor Eric Garcetti, who deserves much credit for this development.

The announcement comes as the nearby Los Angeles State Historic Park is finally being developed into a city centerpiece that, because of the larger project, now promises to connect with the river close to the point where water once was lifted to clay brick pipes and brought to the growing city.

Does Los Angeles really have a river? Yes — the pueblo was founded where it was to be close to its water source. And it was washed away from that site, wherever that was (historians and archaeologists still search for clues as to the location) and rebuilt many times over the course of three decades, eventually finding a permanent spot on higher ground at the place we now know as El Pueblo or Olvera Street, because the Los Angeles River is a Western river, trickling during the dry months, raging during wet winters, carving new channels in flood years.

Accordingly, the project will not return the river to the dangerous flood hazard it was through the 1930s. It will instead update L.A.'s relationship with its river, converting an ugly concrete back alley into a new verdant frontyard, bringing parkland and recreation, along with wildlife habitat and flood protection, to the city center.

Much of the required funding will come from the federal government, and much will come from the city. Before the vision for the river is realized, there will need to be a serious discussion over how that local component is to be raised. But one step at a time. For now, some celebration is in order.

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Letters

Leif Dautch, Ojai

Fracking petition

As an Ojai native who grew up hiking and camping in the Sespe wilderness, I was shocked to learn that a Texas-based oil company submitted a proposal to hydraulically fracture eight new oil and gas wells in the Sespe. I was even more surprised (and disturbed) to discover that fracking operations already were underway in the Sespe Oil Field.

Given the significant threats posed by fracking, namely air and water contamination, greenhouse gas emissions, water depletion and increased geological activity, I started an online petition ([www. SavetheSespe.com](http://www.SavetheSespe.com)) urging the Forest Service to deny the fracking request.

In the first 48 hours, more than 800 people signed the petition, expressing their opposition to fracking in and around the pristine wilderness area. My goal is to collect as many signatures and stories as possible by Wednesday's public comment deadline, deliver them to the Forest Service and let the decision-makers know that our community vehemently opposes fracking in the Sespe.

So whether you oppose all fracking everywhere, think that regulators, scientists and industry officials should take the time to fully evaluate the risky practice before it is implemented, or simply believe that our limited water reserves are better directed to purposes that actually benefit our community (like agriculture), I urge you to join our effort at [www. SavetheSespe.com](http://www.SavetheSespe.com) and make your voice heard.

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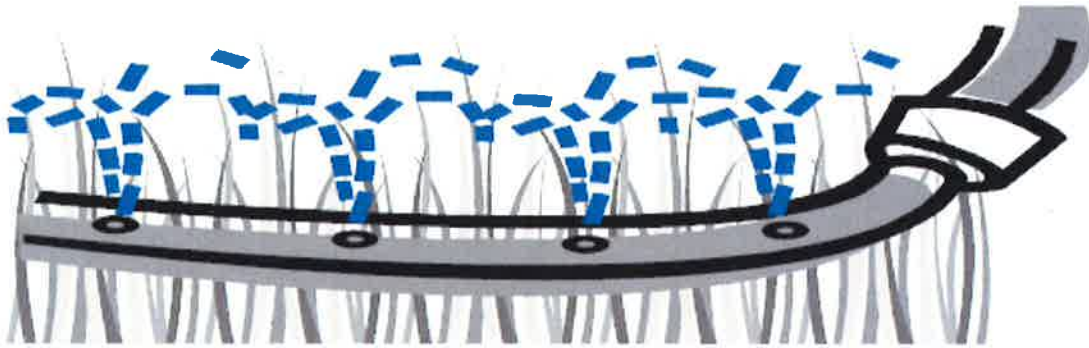
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High-schoolers do well in Solar Cup competition

The Acorn 5/29/2014

Three local high schools earned honors at the annual Solar Cup™ competition held near Temecula at Lake Skinner from May 16 through 19.

Forty schools competed in the nation's largest solar boat competition, sponsored by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

Calabasas High School and Camp David Gonzales were sponsored by Las Virgenes Municipal Water District. Calleguas Water District and Triunfo Sanitation District sponsored Oak Park High School.

In the overall scoring, Camp David Gonzales finished sixth and Oak Park came in 10th place.

Calabasas High School, a first-year team, finished 25th overall but took third-place honors among teams in the rookie division.

The Solar Cup program runs from fall through May. Students build and race a 16-foot single-seat canoe powered by the sun. They apply science and technical skills as well as develop a message reflecting their values in resource conservation.

During the culminating weekend, the students compete in endurance runs and timed sprint events.

Suburban lawns may be cut—permanently

By Stephanie Sumell
The Acorn 5/29/2014

Lush green lawns may soon be a thing of the past.

A statewide drought—and rising water costs—have forced many homeowners to use less water in and around their homes.

The Metropolitan, Las Virgenes and Calleguas water districts recently asked residents and businesses to refrain from outdoor watering for three days so that Metropolitan could service one of its plants.

Such restrictions have prompted some homeowners to seek drought-tolerant alternatives to grass in an effort to save time, money and the environment.

Glenn Izard, the owner of Nordic Nursery in Newbury Park, said he began to see a “noticeable shift” in his business about five years ago. Customers began buying plants—not grass sod or turf—for their lawn areas.

Izard said there are several routes homeowners can take to reduce the cost of maintenance and water for their yards.

“It really depends on the customer’s preference,” he said. Izard recommends choosing plants that will be flattering to a particular home.

He said popular droughttolerant plants include dymondia, cotoneaster, ceanothus and various species of sedum, sage and lavender.

Some customers cover most of the space with gravel or sand and minimal plants; others surround larger plants with a droughttolerant ground cover that can be walked on.

Another option is to fill the space with succulents—a trend that’s “exploded,” Izard said.

“It creates more of Mediterranean theme. You usually cannot walk on (succulents), so it’s a strictly visual sort of thing.”

He said all new plants—even those that are drought-tolerant— need to be watered regularly in their adolescent stage.

“It usually takes about six months for the plants to be able to stand on their own,” Izard said. “After that, homeowners will often use drip irrigation to provide minimal watering to specific plants.”

He said the cost savings for those who remove turf from their lawns are significant.

“The cost (of replanting) is a drop in the bucket. You can usually redo the average front lawn for about 50 percent of the price your water bills would amount to in a year.”

The plant expert said customers will often remove the turf in stages.

“They’ll do it little by little. Once they start taking sections of lawn out, and find out what they can do as an alternative, they get excited and continue to move along.”

Izard said the move toward grass-free lawns neither helps nor hurts his business.

“It’s a Catch-22,” he said. “We used to sell tons and tons of turf. Now, we sell tons and tons of succulents.”

Some homeowners opt to eschew real plants altogether.

SYNLawn, a national artificial turf provider, specializes in installing turf at golf courses, residential homes, commercial properties, playgrounds and rooftop decks.

Danna Freedman, president of SYNLawn Los Angeles, said the company has experienced a “huge influx” in business from residential homeowners in the last year.

“It’s become very popular,” Freedman said. “It allows you to save a tremendous amount of money on water while having a lawn that is virtually maintenance free and lush and green year-round.”

Freedman said the company charges between \$5.50 and \$10 for each square foot of artificial lawn it installs—an investment, she said, that can help homeowners save between 50 and 70 percent on their water bills.

The company president said the materials used for landscaping are “very different” from the materials used for sports field.

“Turf on sports fields contains a rubber crumb filling,” she said. “While that sort of filling is needed for cushioning for sports, it has no place in a landscape.”

Freedman said artificial lawns, made from recycled materials, are much more sophisticated than the AstroTurf used on the set of the popular television series “The Brady Bunch.”

“They are all surprisingly realistic,” Freedman said. “You would have to bend over and touch them to realize they aren’t real.”

Mark Van Dam of Moorpark said he was the first in his neighborhood to install artificial turf in his front yard.

"We made the switch six years ago," he said. "Our home was sort of like the test home."

Van Dam said he would recommend artificial turf.

"I'm glad we did it," he said. "The grass always looks nice, there is little to no maintenance (and) our water bill probably dropped by about 25 percent."

Still, Van Dam admitted, artificial turf isn't completely hasslefree. He said the turf does not lie nicely over tree roots.

"You have to make sure you have the correct sort of tree on and around the lawn," he said. "We replaced our California pepper tree with a magnolia tree."

Izard said he expects droughttolerant plants will remain a staple among homeowners in California and beyond.

"More and more people are doing it," he said. "It's a trend that will continue to grow if we don't get our reservoirs filled back up."

Report puts local beaches in the clear



CLEAN RIDE—A surfer at Big Dume in L.A. County. Big and Little Dume are A-rated beaches. Acornffle photo

Severe drought may be wreaking havoc across California, but there's a silver lining in the lack of rain clouds—improved water quality at local beaches.

With record low rainfall reducing the amount of polluted runoff that is funneled into the sea, water quality improved dramatically at **Los Angeles County** beaches last year, according to Heal the Bay's 24th annual Beach Report Card, which the environmental group released on May 22.

Heal the Bay analysts assigned A-to-F letter grades to 92 beaches in the county for three reporting periods in the 2013- 2014 report, based on levels of weekly bacterial pollution.

Ninety percent of the beaches received A or B grades for the high-traffic summer period between April and October 2013, a 6 percent improvement from last year's grades. That figure also marks a 9 percent uptick from the county's summer average for the previous five years.

In L.A. County, Malibu Surfrider, Paradise Cove, Zuma, Leo Carrillo, Broad and Nicholas Canyon beaches all received an A-rating.

Ventura County once again enjoyed some of the best water quality in the state, earning perfect A grades at all of its 39 monitored beaches in the summer reporting period, including those at County Line, **Point Mugu**, **Channel Islands**, **Port Hueneme**, **Oxnard** and **Ventura Surfer's Point**.

Broad Beach and **Channel Islands Harbor-Hobie Beach** are rated the cleanest among local beaches.

While the news is encouraging, **Los Angeles County** still leads the state in the number of beaches with poor water quality. Overall, one in 10 L.A. County beaches received grades of C or lower during the busy summer season.

The news is worse during wet weather, when half of the beaches received grades of C or lower.

The county is home to three of the 10 locales listed on Heal the Bay's annual Beach Bummer List, which ranks the most polluted beaches in the state.

Mothers Beach in Marina del Rey and Cabrillo Beach harborside in **San Pedro**, both enclosed sites with poor circulation, came in at No. 3 and 4 on the Bummer List, respectively.

The beach at **Santa Monica Pier**, which has grappled with poor water quality for years despite numerous remediation projects, re-entered the list at No. 7.

Swimming at a beach with a water quality grade of C or lower greatly increases the risk of contracting illnesses such as stomach flu, ear infections, upper respiratory infections and rashes.

Contact with polluted water causes over 600,000 cases of excess gastrointestinal illness each year in Los Angeles and **Orange** counties, according to a 2005 analysis conducted by researchers at **UCLA** and Stanford.

Urban runoff remains the leading source of bacterial pollution at local shorelines.

"We've seen marked improvements in California's beach water quality this year due to the historically dry conditions. However, the rains will return and when they do, we need to capture this valuable resource to maximize our local water supplies and keep polluted water out of our ocean," said Kirsten James, science and policy director for water quality at Heal the Bay.

An El Nino is predicted for later this year, so renewed flows could exacerbate underlying water quality issues at local beaches. In response, Heal the Bay urges state lawmakers to amend Prop. 218 to allow for easier approval of stormwater project funding.

Heal the Bay also recommends year-round bacteria testing at popular beaches and restored federal funding for water-quality monitoring programs.

The beach results can be found at www.beachreportcard.org.

The Acorn 5/29/2014

L.A. Now

California: This just in

Garcetti thanks President Obama for 'listening' on L.A. River project



A \$1-billion proposal to restore an 11-mile stretch of the L.A. River received support from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers this week. (Jae C. Hong)

By **SOU MYA KARLAMANGLA**

MAY 29, 2014, 4:08 PM

W

ith new backing from the federal government, city officials celebrated a step forward Thursday for a \$1-billion plan to revitalize a strip of the Los Angeles River.

After originally pushing for a cheaper \$453-million plan, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced this week that it now supports a more robust, \$1-billion proposal that would widen the river and restore habitat along an 11-mile stretch north of downtown through Elysian Park.

Speaking in a grassy park beside the river, Army Corps Col. Kimberly Colloton said the decision not only recognized "the importance of the river to Angelenos, but it validates its place as a waterway of national significance."

The Army Corps' announcement came just days after Mayor Eric Garcetti went to Washington, D.C., to lobby for the more ambitious plan. The event Thursday allowed the mayor to underscore his relationship with President Obama.

"I personally want to thank President Obama, for listening to me many times on this," Garcetti said.

Since he took office last year, Garcetti has traveled to Washington several times, and L.A. has received federal designations that also have been attributed in part to his relationship with the president. Earlier this year, a swath of L.A. neighborhoods were named a "Promise Zone" under Obama's poverty-reduction initiative, and on Wednesday, the Southern California region was chosen by the federal government to receive grants to attract manufacturers.

All four L.A. City Council members who spoke Thursday -- Mitch O'Farrell, Jose Huizar, Tom LaBonge and Gil Cedillo -- commended Garcetti for his work with the White House. O'Farrell credited Thursday's win to "the relationship that our mayor has built with our president."

Despite the celebration, it became clear Thursday that there are still many parts of the plan that need to be worked out.

The \$1-billion proposal splits funding between the federal government, and local and state accounts. Garcetti said Thursday he was confident city officials would secure their half, but didn't specify where the \$500 million would come from.

The plan also still must be approved by Congress. Colloton said her team will complete a feasibility report in the coming months to give to Army Corps headquarters, then refer it to the Civil Works Review Board by the end of the year. After that, it can head to Congress.

"It's not easy to find money in Washington these days," Garcetti said, "but when people saw the merits of this, even with limited funds, they said we need to be a part of changing history in this great city, in this great waterway."

Garcetti said he expects the project to take about a decade, and create 9,000 jobs during construction. He said the proposal would open the door to eventually revitalizing all 51 miles of the river, from the San Fernando Valley to Long Beach.

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Oxnard's desalter

Staff Reports

Wednesday, May 28, 2014

Re: your May 24 article, "\$30 million desalter offline since 2011":

The article reported: "The problem, officials say, stems from a combination of short staffing, bad luck and cost-cutting measures."

Why did they shut the plant down? Yes, let's just spend all the money on imported water. You would think the money from that could have been put toward fixing the problems or building reservoirs to contain the treated water for future use as needed. Well, that future is here and we the taxpayers are going to pay for this again!

Mr. Rydberg stated that the plan to connect the desalter to United Water Conservation District groundwater supplies was scrapped to save money - really! Obviously the people who were in charge of this project couldn't see the future or just wanted to take care of just enough to get by.

Now with all the other problems they say they don't have the employees to tackle the "design and construction." Apparently no one has looked at the people who have within the last few years graduated with degrees that would give anything to have a job!

I am so tired of hearing that "it costs too much." I am not a supporter of taking money that is allocated for one project to use for another however; maybe it's time to take a look at things with what is the most important at this time.

The Oxnard City Council needs to do its job instead of passing the buck. Just fix it and do the right thing. There is no excuse for this.

- Kathy Van Enger,

Simi Valley



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Army Corps to recommend \$1-billion L.A. River project



Leaves line the bed of the Arroyo Seco at its confluence with the Los Angeles River north of downtown Los Angeles, where the river is largely made of concrete. (Luis Sinco / Los Angeles Times)

By **LOUIS SAHAGUN**

MAY 28, 2014, 5:23 PM

Federal officials gave a major boost Wednesday to the city's plans to turn the Los Angeles River into an urban oasis for recreation and an inviting locale for new commercial and residential development.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said it has decided to recommend approval of an ambitious, \$1-billion proposal to restore habitat, widen the river, create wetlands and provide access points and bike trails along an 11-mile stretch north of downtown through Elysian Park.

The city sees those 11 miles as the starting point for a project that will eventually revitalize all 51 miles of the river, from the San Fernando Valley to Long Beach.

The decision, made by Assistant Army Secretary for Civil Works Jo-Ellen Darcy, opens the way for Congress to give its approval and work to begin to transform the unsightly concrete corridor into something resembling the river's natural state.

The Army Corps initially declined to approve the plan in favor of a less ambitious, \$453-million alternative. The city responded with an intense lobbying campaign.

"I was tenacious about this — it's a big win for the city," Mayor Eric Garcetti said. "As I argued in the White House over and over, it's the right thing for the ecology, it's the right thing for the economy and for kids growing up being separated from downtown by a concrete flood control channel."

A few weeks ago, Garcetti said, President Obama told him: "I think we're on track for the L.A. River."

Under terms of the proposal, the \$1.08-billion cost would be shared equally by the federal government and city and state sources.

The bulk of the federal money would come from the Army Corps, with the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency "looking to aggressively bring money to the table as well," Garcetti said. "The rest of the money will come from local and state sources."

If all goes according to plan, he said, "we might begin to see some funding allocated for this effort next year, and jackhammers on concrete not long after that."

City officials estimate that revamping the entire river could create recreational opportunities — kayaking, fishing, bicycling — and attract more than \$5 billion in investment over the next 10 to 15 years, generating up to 18,000 jobs. Communities along the river south of Los Angeles to Long Beach have already begun putting in riverside parks and wetlands.

Only a month ago, the corps informed the mayor's office it intended to recommend a \$453-million plan that would restore 588 acres of habitat and widen the river by 300 feet to form marshlands near Glassell Park, but leave much of the river's banks steep and hard to reach.

Advocacy groups and elected officials led by Garcetti stepped up their campaign for the broader proposal, also known as Alternative 20. It would restore 719 acres, tear out three miles of concrete and widen the river to provide terracing along its eastern banks.

It would also connect the river to Los Angeles State Historic Park near Chinatown and restore its confluence with the Verdugo Wash, near the junction of the 5 and 134 freeways.

On Tuesday, Darcy telephoned Garcetti with the news. "She said, 'We are supporting Alt. 20 on the merits — you made your case. It's a once-in-a-generation chance,' " Garcetti said. Darcy could not be reached for comment.

The Los Angeles River has changed course many times over the last 150 years. First it was the burgeoning city's main source of water. In the late 1930s it was transformed into a flood control channel. In 2007, it was named an amenity of the city's master plan.

Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) said the decision is a major step toward bringing "the L.A. River back to life and promises much greater opportunity for economic and recreational development, providing thousands of additional jobs and billions of dollars of increased investment in the local economy."

L.A. poet Lewis MacAdams, co-founder and president of Friends of the Los Angeles River, praised Garcetti's work on the river.

"How often do you see a mayor travel to Washington again and again to push for an environment project?" MacAdams said. "He did that, and the result could be Los Angeles becoming a place with parks and river running through it again, at last."

Los Angeles City Councilman Tom LaBonge, whose district includes miles of river channel, said the Army Corps' recommendation resulted from "hard work that began in 1988, in the conference room of then-Mayor Tom Bradley. The subject was the L.A. River, and faraway dreams of creating a place of green and wildlife and peaceful surroundings.

"Now, the river channel best known as a drainage for urban runoff and a location site for scary science fiction movies has a chance to transform the city for the better," LaBonge said.

City officials see a 42-acre Union Pacific Railroad property as the starting point. They are in negotiations to buy Taylor Yard north of downtown and transform it into a park and wetlands featuring river tributaries.

However, environmentalists and communities along the river, many of them working-class, have raised concerns that development interests will take over the process. They fear that public access and environmental concerns will be subsumed beneath a desire to give wealthier Angelenos pleasant places to live, work and shop.

Low-income residents of Elysian Park have voiced fears that they will be forced to relocate because they will not be able to afford rising rents and home prices.

The median price of a house in Elysian Valley rose 21% over the last year to \$443,400, according to Zillow.com, an online real estate database. Countywide, median house prices rose 16% over the same period.

Garcetti has said the city will strive to balance all interests as the project moves ahead, saying, "everyone wants the good gentrification and not the bad."

louis.sahagun@latimes.com

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Readers React Can L.A. handle a revitalized river?



A pair of Metro Gold Line trains cross over the Los Angeles River north of downtown. The city's revitalization plan hasn't yet won federal approval, but it is already changing neighborhoods and industrial zones along the waterway. (Los Angeles Times)

MAY 28, 2014

Your article on revitalizing a lengthy stretch of the Los Angeles River made it sound as if a bunch of kids had just found a vacant lot on the block. ("**Big plans, and concerns, surround L.A. River's revitalization,**" May 24)

The environmentalists want to return the river to nature, the developers want to make money, and the politicians want to create jobs and help the economy. Only once in the article do the words "flood control channel" appear.

This is not an empty lot on the block; rather, it is a flood control channel that was designed and built to protect the life and property of the people of Los Angeles from the occasional flooding of the L.A. River.

When I was young, I lived in the Atwater district. I have seen the river with 50 feet of water crashing down the channel. What is going to happen if more of it is developed into "recreational opportunities" and other projects?

Bill Gardner

San Marino

Everyone worries about displacing working-class residents as land near the L.A. River becomes more attractive. But the answer isn't to stop development, which amounts to continuing the old failed policies of disinvestment that led to endemic poverty in the first place.

Indeed, one key reason why people struggle to afford a place to live is that there aren't enough new housing units to keep pace with demand.

Rather, we should recognize that it is good for neighborhoods to become safer and more livable, and make development beneficial for long-term residents. That means addressing the housing shortage while ensuring that those who have put in sweat equity share in the rewards.

For decades, L.A. deliberately segregated itself. The city has a duty to promote investment in neglected neighborhoods and certainly shouldn't block new developments that create jobs and alleviate the housing shortage—but it should do so in a way that ensures existing communities are treated fairly.

Joseph Sanderson

Los Angeles

The Los Angeles River has historically been one of our city's most underutilized and under appreciated natural resources. However, as partly evidenced by your article, that is finally beginning to change.

We are excited by this growing awareness of the river as a magnificent public resource, but with this awareness comes the need for a unifying vision for its entire 51 miles and its tributaries, helping to knit together the cities that line its banks. This vision must be established through a participatory, inclusive process that inspires the best of what the L.A. region can be, balancing the interests of all involved as all significant projects need to do.

We see the river as a place for collaboration, not competition.

Omar Brownson

Los Angeles

The writer is executive director of the Los Angeles River Revitalization Corp.

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California's flawed water system can't track usage

The Associated Press

Tuesday, May 27, 2014

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) - Call them the fortunate ones: Nearly 4,000 California companies, farms and others are allowed to use free water with little oversight when the state is so bone dry that deliveries to nearly everyone else have been severely slashed.

Their special status dates back to claims made more than a century ago when water was plentiful. But in the third year of a drought that has ravaged California, these "senior rights holders" dominated by corporations and agricultural concerns are not obliged to conserve water.

Nobody knows how much water they actually use, though it amounts to trillions of gallons each year, according to a review of their own reports by The Associated Press. Together, they hold more than half the rights to rivers and streams in California.

The AP found the state's system is based on self-reported, incomplete records riddled with errors and years out of date; some appear to be using far less water than records would indicate.

"We really don't know how much water they've actually diverted," said Bob Rinker, a manager in the State Water Resources Control Board's water rights division.

With a burgeoning population and projections of heightened climate-related impacts on snowpack and other water supplies, the antiquated system blunts California's ability to move water where it is most needed.

When gold miners flocked to the West in the 1800s, the state drafted laws that rewarded those who first staked claims on the region's abundant rivers and streams. Today, California still relies on that honor system, even during drought.

The system's inequities are particularly evident in California's arid Central Valley.

"In a good year we wouldn't be able to stand here unless we got wet. This year it won't produce anything," said second-generation rice farmer Al Montna as he knelt in the dust, pulling apart dirt clods on the 1,800 acres he left idle because of scarce water.

About 35 miles north, fourth-generation rice farmer Josh Sheppard had more than enough water, thanks to his water district's superior rights to Feather River water dating to the late 1800s.

"No one thinks of it when there's ample water and plenty to go around, but in these times of tightness it is a very contentious resource that gets fought over," Sheppard said, standing next to his flooded fields.

To find out how many entities hold these superior rights and how much water they use, the AP obtained the water board's database for 2010 - the last complete year of water usage reports - and interviewed state officials and dozens of landowners.

The state only collects the records every three years on a staggered basis, meaning its information is always out of date.

Tom Howard, the board's executive director, acknowledged the state should get a better handle on water use. "Anything to improve the information we have would help," he said, citing the need for annual reporting of usage and real time stream flow data.

But he rejected any suggestions that special rights granted under the system should be ended. "People have made investments based on promises in the existing system. Towns grew up and land was developed based on promises of a secure water supply. Do we strand those investments to start over?" he said.

While much of the water reported by this group is consumed by people or farms, some of the biggest users generate hydroelectric power for profit then return that water to the river for use downstream. The state doesn't know how much is used for each purpose.

More than half of the 3,897 entities with active senior and riparian rights to water are corporations, such as the state's biggest utility, Pacific Gas & Electric Co. which creates hydroelectric power, and the Hearst Corp., which has water rights for its remote, Bavarian-style forest compound called Wyntoon.

Also among the biggest rights holders are rural water districts and government agencies such as the water departments of San Francisco and Los Angeles.

San Francisco, whose water rights date to 1902 when its mayor nailed a handwritten notice on a tree, also uses free Sierra Nevada water to generate power for its airport, schools and firehouses.

This year, the state cut water deliveries to farmers and cities by 95 percent, and the federal government also imposed sharp restrictions on its water customers. But companies, farmers and cities with water rights that pre-date 1914 were exempt this year from mandatory cuts, even though they collectively are the biggest water users in the state.

The AP independently verified that just 24 of the rights holders reported using more than twice the volume of water that California's vast system of state and federal dams and aqueducts ships to cities and farms in an average year.

As summer looms, some water scientists question the utility of conservation efforts that do not restrict consumption by most water users with old rights. "Obviously, senior water rights holders have the most to benefit from the current system," said Peter Gleick, director of the nonpartisan Pacific Institute.

Those with century-old rights say the system works well because it provides a reliable supply of water. And in a drought, the state lets some of them sell any extra water, at the market rate.

The water board does not require monitoring or meters for users whose rights date back a century or more, or who have rights to draw from a waterway adjoining their land.

Rights holders have successfully defeated legal and legislative efforts to strengthen California's oversight, said Andy Sawyer, an attorney with the board.

California made progress toward accountability in 2009, when a new law required rights holders to report their water use and gave the board power to punish them for failing to file statements properly. But the rights holders could gain exemption from the strict monitoring requirements in that law by convincing authorities it was too costly.

The water board doesn't have staff to systematically check even obvious mistakes in the records, said Aaron Miller, a board senior engineer. He said the state nonetheless uses this inaccurate data to make decisions about when to grant new water permits.

Reporters Jason Dearen and Garance Burke can be reached at <http://www.twitter.com/JHDearen> and <http://www.twitter.com/garanceburke>



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Garcetti lobbies U.S. for more expensive L.A. River project



The L.A. River flows toward downtown. The Army Corps of Engineers has recommended a less ambitious, \$453-million alternative to the \$1-billion restoration of the river sought by Mayor Eric Garcetti. (Mark Boster, Los Angeles Times)

By **RICHARD SIMON**

MAY 26, 2014, 5:13 PM | REPORTING FROM WASHINGTON

On a recent trip to the nation's capital, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti made sure to call on Jo-Ellen Darcy.

As assistant Army secretary for civil works, Darcy is critical to the city's efforts to win federal approval for a costly and ambitious plan to restore Los Angeles River habitat and provide recreational opportunities along an 11-mile stretch of the waterway north of downtown.

City officials have asked the Army Corps of Engineers, which manages the river as a flood control channel, to approve a \$1-billion renovation plan. But the corps staff has recommended a less ambitious, \$453-million alternative, which is why Garcetti and his most powerful

congressional ally — California Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer — are stepping up their efforts in Washington.

They want to persuade Darcy, the Army Corps brass and the White House to back the costlier plan.

Garcetti discussed the project last fall with President Obama and has taken administration officials on tours of the river. "At the end of the day, I think we have a president who can help," Garcetti said in an interview .

Boxer, head of the Senate committee overseeing corps projects, said she is so strongly committed to the more ambitious alternative that she has no fallback position. "My Plan B is to make sure Plan A happens," she said.

Boxer said the corps staff recommendation is "exactly the opposite of what the administration has committed to do in places like Los Angeles." She said the administration has designated the Los Angeles River a priority in initiatives to promote conservation and recreation,

According to Boxer, the corps' Los Angeles district office initially recommended the costlier version but was overruled by corps' headquarters in Washington. A corps' spokesman denied any disagreement between offices. "We're one corps, one voice," spokesman Jay Field said.

But Field said the corps is considering Garcetti's recent offer to split the costs with the government if the agency approves the more expansive project.

Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick, the corps' commanding general, is expected to submit a recommendation to Congress late this year or early next year. Bostick's recommendation will go to Darcy, whose responsibilities include overseeing the corps, before it goes to Congress. It also will go to the White House budget office.

A White House spokesman declined to comment.

A spokesman for Darcy said the assistant Army secretary "understands the passion that the people living there have to restore the L.A. River, and is working diligently with local government to find the best path forward."

But advocates for the costlier project have their work cut out for them. Those familiar with the corps say that it is rare for the chief to reject a staff recommendation.

Garcetti's offer to split the costs if the corps approves the more expansive project does have a precedent. The federal government is paying for half of the Florida Everglades restoration. Typically, the federal government picks up 65% of the cost of such projects.

The city's 50-50 offer comes as the corps faces demands for flood protection and harbor dredging projects elsewhere, including a \$60-billion-plus backlog of work awaiting funding.

"This is the challenge we always have in L.A.," said Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Burbank), who has been working to persuade the corps to back the more ambitious project. "It's bigger and more expensive to do things in L.A."

With the corps facing a backlog of projects, "I think they are very circumspect about adding big new items to the list," Schiff added.

Garcetti said that he has sought to allay the "sticker shock" of the project by pointing out that the cost will be shared by the city and others and spread out over a decade or so.

"I don't think that kids who are growing up in disadvantaged neighborhoods along the L.A. River should be punished for the price of real estate in Los Angeles simply because it's cheaper to do water projects in Wichita," Garcetti said. "It's an issue of environmental justice."

But Steve Ellis, vice president of the watchdog group Taxpayers for Common Sense, said local officials who want to undertake more ambitious projects than the corps recommends usually must pick up the difference in cost, not expect the corps to split the cost.

"If they do this for L.A., why wouldn't they do it for everybody?" Ellis said.

Schiff suspects that the corps may have already made up its mind, suggesting that the project has been run up the chain of command, given its high profile.

As a result, proponents of the more ambitious project are beginning to look for other pots of federal money to help Los Angeles undertake the \$1-billion restoration. They hope money will be available, for example, from the Interior Department's America's Great Outdoors initiative and the Environmental Protection Agency's Urban Waters Federal Partnership.

richard.simon@latimes.com

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Drought leads to cleaner water quality

By Tony Barboza , Los Angeles Times
Ventura County Star 5/25/2014

LOS ANGELES — There's at least one upside to the California drought: Record-low rainfall has resulted in cleaner water up and down the coast, a new report says.

Ninety-five percent of California beaches earned A or B grades for water quality during the summer of 2013, a 2 percent improvement over the previous year, according to the annual Beach Report Card released Thursday by Heal the Bay, an environmental group.

The grades ticked up largely because lower amounts of polluted runoff flowed down to the coast during the driest year on record, Heal the Bay says.

The analysis uses water quality test results from hundreds of beaches to assign each a grade of A to F based on the level of bacteria in beach water, which can indicate pathogens that can sicken swimmers.

The report found improvements even at Los Angeles County beaches, which have long been among the most polluted in the state. Last year 90 percent of the county's beaches earned A or B grades, compared with 84 percent during the previous year's summer season, which runs from April to October.

The higher grades may seem like encouraging news for beachgoers. However, 2013 was the driest calendar year in 119 years of record-keeping and the runoff-diminishing effect of several years of low rainfall "may be providing a false sense of long-term beach water quality improvement," the report says.

Water quality could turn for the worse if, as predicted, an El Niño develops in the Pacific Ocean later this year, potentially bringing more precipitation to sweep a greater volume of contaminated runoff to California beaches.

Santa Monica officials blamed the city's dip in water quality on large rips in netting they had installed under the pier to keep pigeons from gathering and polluting the water with bacteria-laden droppings.

"We don't have any sewage leaks or storm drain runoff during dry weather in the summer," said Dean Kubani, sustainability manager for the city.

Santa Monica has since repaired the netting and expects to see water quality readings jump back up again next year, he said, adding that "if we don't see improvement, we're going to take every action that we need to ensure that the water's clean."

The No. 1 worst-polluted beach in California last year, according to Heal the Bay, was

Cowell Beach near the wharf in Santa Cruz .

Water quality continued to improve in Long Beach, which was once notorious for its polluted shoreline. The city's beaches earned 87 percent A and B grades during the summer, up 10 percent from the previous year.

Also significantly cleaner was the main beach at the Santa Catalina Island tourist hub of Avalon, which had ranked among the 10 most-polluted beaches for 12 of the last 14 years because of chronic leaks in its sewer system.

Water regulators in 2011 ordered the small city to address the problem by fixing its sewers, improving monitoring and correcting other problems. The city has since spent millions on repairs and adopted ordinances and pollution reduction measures that have cleaned up bacteria levels enough to remove it from the "Beach Bummer" list.

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Across the nation

ORE GO N

Boil-water order frightens public

Facing the largest boilwater order in the region's history, Portlanders emptied stores' supplies of bottled water, chucked potentially contaminated food and braced for a complicated Memorial Day weekend .

About 670,000 people in the Portland, Oregon area were told after lunch Friday to boil water used for drinking, cooking and toothbrushing. Three routine tests this week showed that the water system was contaminated by E. coli bacteria, usually associated with animal or human fecal matter.

The finding suggested that the water supply could include other harmful bacteria, although health officials said the worst condition someone likely would suffer is diarrhea.

Within the city, nearly every grocery store — from mom and pop shops to Walmart — reported that they were out of water by the evening. At Grocery Outlet in North Portland, staffers said it took about half an hour to run out of the large jugs of water. People then started buying sparkling water, juice, beer and ice.

"It's a weird combination of cabin fever, 'Road Warrior' and doomsday scenario preparation," a store employee said by phone. A manager said she tried to order more water supplies for the weekend, but "they aren't coming," she said.

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Also from the Legislature

SACRAMENTO

Bill would ban plastic microbeads

The state Assembly on Friday passed a bill banning the use of plastic microbeads in soaps and cosmetics, following actions already being taken by manufacturers and other state legislatures to keep the products out of water ways.

Johnson & Johnson, Procter & Gamble Co. and other manufacturers already are phasing out the exfoliating ingredients, which are considered harmful to the environment in part because they are not biodegradable.

AB1699 by Assemblyman Richard Bloom, D-Santa Monica, heads to the Senate after passing on a 45-10 vote.

Wire services

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Simi Valley holds public works open house

[Rachel McGrath](#)

Ventura County Star 5/23/2014



CARLOS CHAVEZ/SPECIAL TO THE STAR

CARLOS CHAVEZ/SPECIAL TO THE STAR Guests at the city of Simi Valley's public works plant.



CARLOS CHAVEZ/SPECIAL TO THE STAR Guests at the city of Simi Valley's public works open house tour the water-quality control plant Thursday.

The city of Simi Valley opened up its public works department and water-quality control plant to the public for the first time as part of the 2014 National Public Works Week.

On Thursday, residents could tour the facility at 500 W. Los Angeles Ave., talk to public works employees about what they do and how they do it, and get information on water conservation, landscaping and recycling.

The Simi Valley Public Works Department is responsible for maintaining the fleet of city vehicles including buses, repairing wastewater pipes and city streets, signs and streetlights, tree trimming, landscaping and sanitation.



CARLOS CHAVEZ/SPECIAL TO THE STAR Simi Valley police SWAT team member Greg Buchanan gives Caroline and Wayne Ferber a tour of the Bearcat police vehicle during the public works open house Thursday.

Huston Currie, who's lived in Simi Valley for 10 years, came because he was interested in finding out more about the services the city offers.

"I'm a homeowner up in Wood Ranch, and I'm right on the edge of the debris basin, so they come down there a lot and I interact with them a lot," he said.

"I think it's a great idea to be able to come and talk to the people who do the work."

Turnout was very encouraging, said Joe Deakin, assistant public works director.

"This is our first year doing this, and we didn't get to do all the advertising and outreach that we wanted to, but we're really pleased that some of the community have been able to find us," Deakin said.

"Usually, we're out there with our heads down working, but this is a nice change of pace for us and an opportunity to brag a little bit about the things we do."

Among the fun things to do was riding a bus through the city's bus wash.

The city has 11 full-size buses and 13 smaller buses that are used for services such as Dial-A-Ride, and each vehicle is washed daily.

As the large, whirring brushes scrubbed off the dirt, Chris Oberender, deputy director of maintenance, said the water used to wash the vehicles is collected.

The water passes through the facility's sanitation plant, which collects the city's wastewater and treats it until it's clean enough to be released into the arroyo and out to the ocean.

"The water is very dirty, so we clean it some and move it to another holding tank and we clean it some more. There's a series of holding tanks, and the water moves through the plant until we're able to dispose of it into the stream at the back," Oberender said.

Longtime Simi resident Marco Todesco said he was glad for a chance to come and ask questions and find out more about how the city works.

"I think I have a reasonable idea of what they do but I want to know the details and see the facility," he said. "I think we take things for granted and I think it's great they they're educating people."

Read more: <http://www.vcstar.com/news/2014/may/23/simi-valley-holds-public-works-open-house/#ixzz33EV6dihS>

- vcstar.com



Letters

Water wise?

Re "Indoor water park taking the plunge,"
Business, May 22

The Times reports that an "immense aqua attraction" in the form of a water park, which will be open only to the guests of the adjacent hotel, has been approved and is being built near Disneyland.

The Times has also reported that California is in the middle of a historic drought. Hmm.

RANDY WINBIGLER
Cathedral City

La

Times 5/27/2014

Hotel with exclusive indoor water park is rising near Disneyland



The recreation areas at Great Wolf Lodge Southern California will be almost entirely indoors and accessible only to overnight guests. Above, the wave pool at the Great Wolf Lodge Pocono Mountains in Pennsylvania. (Great Wolf Resorts Inc.)

By **ROGER VINCENT**

MAY 21, 2014 8:09 PM

A big hotel with its own indoor water park is being built near Disneyland as a growing Wisconsin resort operator brings a new tourist attraction to Southern California.

Construction officially started Wednesday on a \$300-million woodsy-themed inn and family entertainment complex in Garden Grove that will be the first of its kind in the region.

Unlike most other water parks in the West, the recreation areas at Great Wolf Lodge Southern California will be almost entirely indoors and accessible only to overnight guests when it opens in early 2016.

The development on Harbor Boulevard south of Disneyland is a gamble in scope and style. The suites-only lodge will have 600 rooms and its immense aqua attraction will not be exposed to the sunshine that once made Orange County an agricultural oasis.

"We are weatherproof fun," said Susan Storey of Great Wolf Resorts Inc., which already operates water parks in the frigid winters of the Midwest and baking summers of Texas. "It doesn't matter whether it's hot or cold, sunny or snowing."

Making the 100,000-square-foot water park exclusive to resort guests is central to its appeal, she said.

"It's never overrun, never overcrowded," Storey said. "And there are always plenty of towels."

Suites, which sleep at least six, will start at about \$250 a night, she said. Each unit will have a refrigerator and a microwave oven.

The 12-acre hotel, resort and conference center will be developed by Colorado real estate firm McWhinney in a joint venture with co-owner and operator Great Wolf Resorts. The vast complex will have multiple recreational options under one roof intended to entertain guests' children.

Among them will be miniature golf, a motion-simulation theater, an arcade, "mini" bowling and a kid spa offering ice cream-themed manicures and pedicures. There will also be an adventure game in which kids embark on quests through the resort, and evening story time by the lodge's grand lobby fireplace.

Dining options will include a bar and grill, a pizza parlor, a hamburger joint and a sweet shop.

But the raison d'être of Great Wolf Lodge will be the water park, with zones intended for toddlers up to adults. The Howlin' Tornado slide will start in a funnel and drop six stories, and the Wolf Tail slide will take riders in a 360-degree loop.

Great Wolf hopes that its proximity to Disneyland and near other regional theme parks will encourage families to add a day at the beginning or end of their trips to include the water park or perhaps make Great Wolf Lodge their base for a Southern California jaunt.

The Garden Grove complex will be the 13th Great Wolf Lodge resort in the country.

Garden Grove has worked to encourage hotel development in recent years, City Manager Matthew Fertal said, but Great Wolf held special appeal as a branded destination with its own entertainment.

"We want something unique for Garden Grove, not just hotels for people going to Disneyland," Fertal said. "This puts Garden Grove on the map."

The city will give the developers \$47 million in funds earmarked for redevelopment to help subsidize construction of the resort.

"It was a classic redevelopment site with blighted uses," Fertal said of the location on Harbor Boulevard north of the 22 Freeway. The property previously held a low-rent motel, a trailer park and a bar.

The new resort will pay the city an estimated \$8 million a year in taxes, he said, mostly raised from bed taxes paid by guests.

The city has also approved a 780-room hotel project for a San Diego developer that hopes to draw people going to the Anaheim Convention Center. Anaheim officials recently approved a \$180-million expansion of the convention center that is set to begin this summer.

Meanwhile, the Great Wolf Resort will be one of only a few full-service hotels to be built in the region in the last decade, said Irvine hotel industry analyst and property broker Alan Reay of Atlas Hospitality.

"Great Wolf is an established company," Reay said. "They have a great track record."

Reay said he was surprised to learn that the water park would be mostly indoors, but commended Great Wolf for being the first in the state to combine a hotel with a water park.

"This is a pioneering project for Orange County and Southern California," he said. "You have Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm and this is right in the middle. It's perfect for this location."

roger.vincent@latimes.com

Twitter: @rogervincent

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Las Virgenes – Triunfo JPA can seek reversal of ineffective EPA standards for Malibu Creek

Staff Report

May 13, 2014 [Malibu SurfSide](#)

The Las Virgenes – Triunfo Joint Powers Authority (JPA) received approval on May 6 from Federal District Court to challenge a Consent Decree that imposes unnecessary restrictions on the Tapia Water Reclamation Facility that treats wastewater for some 90,000 persons in Western Los Angeles and Eastern Ventura Counties. The restrictions were the result of an Environmental Protection Agency order issued in the 1990s and revised in 2013.

If the new regulations were to become effective, it is estimated the JPA would need to spend millions on new facilities, which would result in significantly higher rates for sewer customers of Triunfo Sanitation District and Las Virgenes Municipal Water District.

The JPA had sought to intervene in a federal lawsuit that imposed the restrictions. Instead of permitting intervention, the court directed the District to directly challenge the order, pointing out a successful challenge would eliminate not only the restrictions against the Tapia facility, but also aid other jurisdictions negatively impacted by other Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) mandates.

“This is an important first step in getting the court to address this matter,” said Wayne Lemieux, attorney for the JPA. “We look forward to having the opportunity to reveal the EPA’s flawed analysis.”

In March 2013, the JPA filed a petition in federal court, asking to be included among the parties of a consent decree related to the establishment of TMDLs for the Malibu Creek watershed. That was followed by a September 2013 federal court filing seeking “Declaratory and Injunctive Relief” from the Total Maximum Daily Load mandates for Malibu Creek and Lagoon published by the EPA on July 2.

The filing cites numerous instances of inappropriate actions by EPA in the course of formulating the TMDL document. The JPA has stated that implementation of the TMDL mandates would impose a significant financial hardship on the communities it serves without any assurances of significant water quality improvements in the Malibu Creek watershed.

A key issue behind the more stringent water treatment standards is the presence of algae in the Malibu Creek watershed. The EPA’s proposed standards would reduce the level of nutrients in Tapia’s effluent to below those that apply to drinking water standards. The JPA points out the creek’s unique chemistry and the presence of algae upstream of Tapia’s discharge point indicate natural conditions are sufficient to promote algae growth.

The Las Virgenes – Triunfo JPA provides wastewater treatment, recycled water service and biosolids composting for residents of Western Los Angeles and Eastern Ventura Counties.

- See more at: <http://www.malibusurfsidenews.com/las-virgenes-%E2%80%93-triunfo-jpa-can-see-reversal-ineffective-epa-standards-malibu-creek#sthash.l8Zcg2EC.dpuf>