

June 6, 2023

R-31

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a Resolution in support of the formation of the Lower San Gabriel River Recreation and Park District; direct the City Clerk to file the Resolution with the Local Area Formation Commission – Los Angeles (LAFCO-LA); and, authorize the City Manager to approve the final District Boundary Map on behalf of the City. (Citywide)

DISCUSSION

Parks provide many community benefits such as encouraging physical activity, improving health and fitness, mitigating against urban heat effects and air pollution, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions through trees and greenery. However, according to the CalEnviroScreen 4.0, many census tracts along the Lower San Gabriel River – largely defined by the Whittier Narrows Dam on the north and the Pacific Ocean in the City of Long Beach (City) to the south – are categorized as “disadvantaged communities” due to disproportionate exposure to poor air quality resulting from congested freeways such as the I-605, I-5, SR-91, and the I-405. Furthermore, many disadvantaged communities along the Lower San Gabriel River suffer from a severe lack of access to recreational opportunities and outdoor park space. Within City limits, every census tract abutting the Lower San Gabriel River north of Pacific Coast Highway contains less than one acre of park space per 1,000 residents.

The single greatest barrier to new park space along the Lower San Gabriel River is lack of funding and resources to maintain and operate those parks. The recently approved State water bond (Proposition 1) provides funding opportunities for the revitalization of the Lower LA River watershed, including a \$30 million direct allocation to the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) and funds for urban creek restoration. However, these resources are strictly limited to acquisition and development of facilities and cannot be used for operations or maintenance of park facilities. A lack of local resources often means that parks cannot be developed, let alone properly maintained.

While the Lower San Gabriel River serves an important purpose as a flood protection and control channel, it also presents a unique opportunity to introduce new parks and recreation space and revitalize natural habitats. Furthermore, the Lower San Gabriel River also presents an opportunity to enhance the micro-mobility system. Currently, the San Gabriel River features a Class-I bike path that connects to numerous points of interest. Enhancing the micro-mobility system in the Lower San Gabriel River will create a more diverse, convenient, and accessible transportation network, while reducing congestion and promoting new economic activity.

Lower San Gabriel River Recreation and Parks District

As a regional challenge, lack of park space and access to the Lower San Gabriel River requires a regional solution. Recognizing the myriad challenges jurisdictions face in coordinating park projects and funding, in 2021, Senator Bob Archuleta authored [Senate Bill 268](#) authorizing Los Angeles County cities along the Lower San Gabriel River to form the Lower San Gabriel River Recreation and Parks District (District). The purpose of the District would be to advance park developments and activities along the San Gabriel River that exceed the boundaries of the individual cities.

The District Board would be comprised of 15 members in total. This includes the eleven cities along the Lower San Gabriel River: Artesia, Bellflower, Cerritos, Downey, Hawaiian Gardens, Lakewood, Long Beach, Norwalk, Pico Rivera, Santa Fe Springs, and Whittier. Additional members would be appointed to the Board, including two members of the public appointed by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors; the executive officer of the RMC; and one representative of a nonprofit organization that serves the Lower San Gabriel River region and specializes in open space public education and outdoor activities appointed by the initial board of directors. District boundaries are anticipated to extend one mile from the river following major roadways. A draft map is attached, and the final boundary map for the District will be presented to each member City for approval. The City Manager or an appointee would be authorized to approve that map.

The City of Pico Rivera will serve as the lead city applicant for the formation of the District. Senator Archuleta identified the City of Pico Rivera as the most suitable agency to lead the establishment of the District due to the City's leadership in developing a comprehensive framework to expand access to parks and open space along the San Gabriel River and the Rio Hondo. The City of Pico Rivera, in partnership with the RMC, have been actively engaging and informing local city managers, public works directors, and parks directors along the Lower San Gabriel River about the overall background, intent and purpose, and next steps associated with SB 268.

The District is intended to help promote the development of open space and parks for the benefit of communities along the Lower San Gabriel River by increasing interjurisdictional coordination and resources. By providing a District to assist with advancing recreational opportunities along the river, there will be greater access to funding and the burden of organizing activities, ensuring public safety, and developing additional facilities will be shared or in some cases lifted from individual cities. While most existing funds for parks are limited to acquisition or development, the District could bring more flexible resources to use for ongoing costs.

Staff recommends the City Council approve the attached Resolution supporting the formation of the District through the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) process. The City will be one of the first cities to support following the City of Pico Rivera's lead on the formation of the District.

Staff further recommends that, once the Board is formed, the City advocate for Board representation to be weighted according to population and geographic territory represented along the Lower San Gabriel River. The initial Board would comprise 15 members, each with one vote, as described above. Since the City represents roughly one-fifth of the Lower San Gabriel River area and a significant portion of the population in the District, the City should request to have a more equitable vote structure, whereby votes on key issues like those that have a direct fiscal impact on the member jurisdictions would require both a majority vote of the Board members and a weighted-vote based on geographic territory and population in order to be adopted.

This matter was reviewed by Deputy City Attorney Anita Lakhani on May 18, 2023, and by Revenue Management Officer Geraldine Alejo on May 2, 2023.

TIMING CONSIDERATIONS

The RMC is currently in the process of forming the District through LAFCO. While the City's Resolution is not a requirement for the establishment of the District, it is recommended that the City submit the Resolution in support of RMC's efforts prior to completion of the LAFCO process, anticipated later this year.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation is to adopt a Resolution in support of the formation of the Lower San Gabriel River Recreation and Park District and approve the district boundaries on behalf of the City. The long-term fiscal impacts of District Board participation are unknown. The Board, initially consisting of 15-member representatives, would be responsible for developing the District's funding plan. Overall funding needs and sources will be based upon the amount and types of services to be provided by the District. The District would have authority to apply jointly for funds, solicit private donations and potential public-private partnerships for funds to operate and maintain parks, and leverage funding by fee assessment or tax transfer of the entities within the District service area.

It is not expected that the Board will recommend a fee assessment, as the cities in the District boundaries have not expressed an interest in leveraging this funding mechanism. Furthermore, voter approval would be required for any taxes applied within the District. The Department would return to the City Council for land use approval on any future projects recommended by the Board within the City's boundaries. This recommendation has no fiscal impact beyond the budgeted scope of duties and is consistent with City Council priorities. There is no local job impact associated with this recommendation.

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

June 6, 2023

Page 4

SUGGESTED ACTION:

Approve recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,



BRENT DENNIS
DIRECTOR
PARKS, RECREATION & MARINE

APPROVED:



THOMAS B. MODICA
CITY MANAGER

ATTACHMENT – RESOLUTION
ATTACHMENT A – BOUNDARY MAP
ATTACHMENT B – FAQ'S

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

RESOLUTION NO.

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE
CITY OF LONG BEACH IN SUPPORT OF THE FORMATION
OF AND INCLUSION IN THE LOWER SAN GABRIEL RIVER
RECREATION AND PARKS DISTRICT

WHEREAS, In October of 2021, California Senate Bill 268, sponsored by
Senator Bob Archuleta, was signed into law authorizing the formation of the Lower San
Gabriel River Recreation and Parks District (District); and

WHEREAS, the Lower San Gabriel River originates at the Whittier Narrows
Dam and flows southward to the Pacific Ocean through many disadvantaged communities,
where residents are disproportionately impacted by poor air quality from local heavy industry
and congested transportation corridors, and suffer from a severe lack of access to
recreational opportunities and outdoor park space; and

WHEREAS, parks have many beneficial impacts on communities;
encouraging physical activity, improving health and fitness, reducing urban heating effects
and air pollution, reducing greenhouse gas emissions through trees and greenery, and
providing important economic benefits, and

WHEREAS, many communities along the Lower San Gabriel River are
among some of the most park-poor areas LA County, lacking the resources to fund,
develop, maintain and operate the parks and recreational opportunities that their residents
need; and

WHEREAS, the City of Long Beach has a significant interest in the continued
development of recreational opportunities for all residents, including facilities and activities
which utilize and enhance this important resource and which improves access to the Lower
San Gabriel River for everyone; and

WHEREAS, the proposed annexation is categorically exempt from the

1 California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section
2 20, as a change in the organization of local agencies, and the Categorical Exemption was
3 adopted by the City of Pico Rivera, as lead agency, on March 28, 2023;

4 NOW, THEREFORE, the City Council of the City of Long Beach resolves as
5 follows:

6 Section 1. This Resolution is hereby adopted and approved by the City of
7 Long Beach in support the City of Pico Rivera’s application for formation of the Lower San
8 Gabriel River Recreation and Parks District as authorized and in the manner provided by
9 the Cortese-Know-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000.

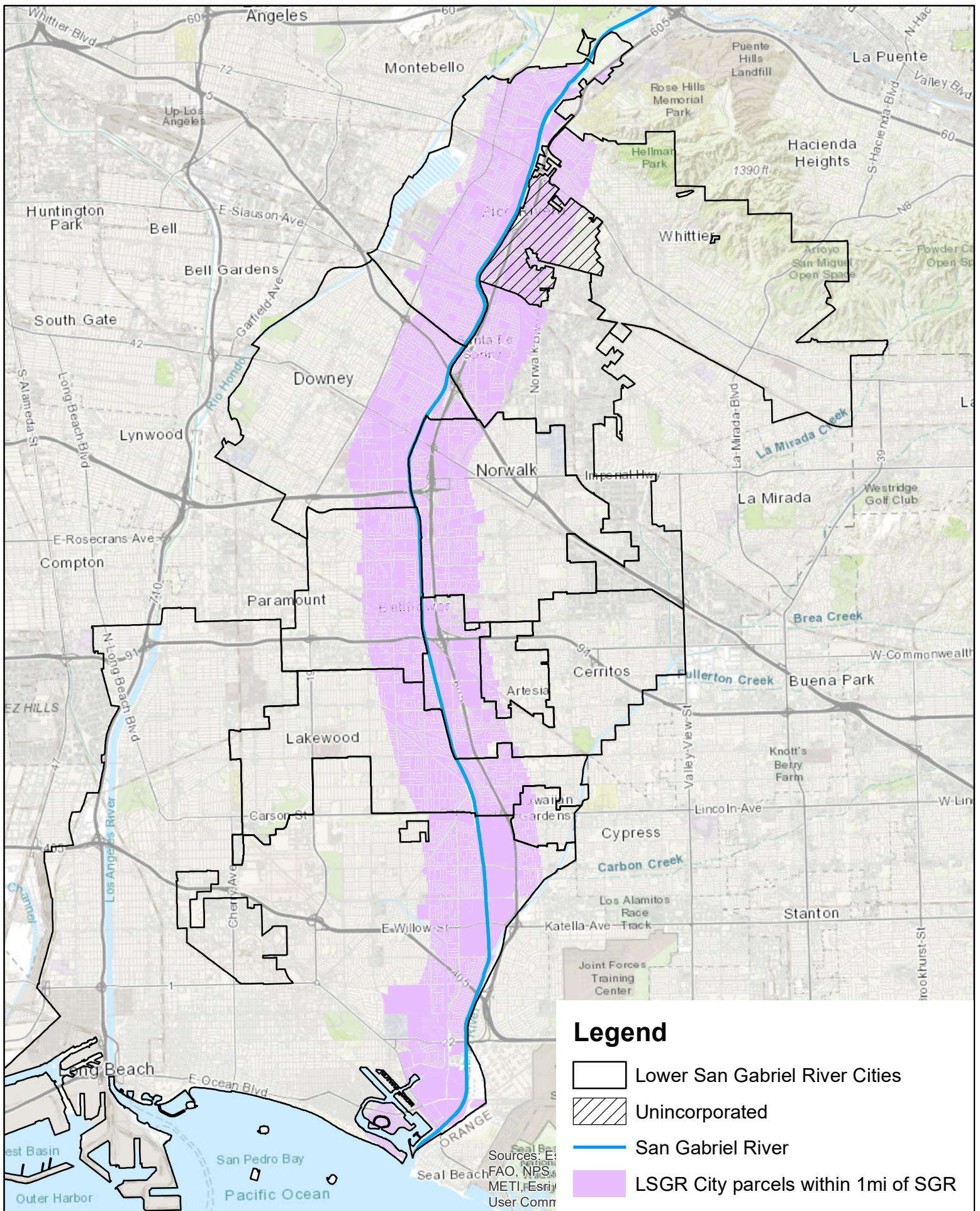
10 Section 2. The City of Long Beach will cooperate with the formation of the
11 District and is requesting to be included within the district as outlined in Senate Bill and as
12 indicated on the finalized District Boundary Map.

13 Section 3. The Clerk of the City of Long Beach is hereby authorized and
14 directed to file a certified copy of this Resolution with the Executive Officer of the Local
15 Agency Formation Commission for the County of Los Angeles.

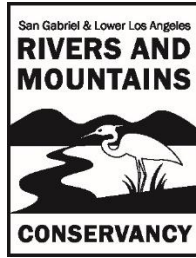
16 Section 4. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption
17 by the City Council, and the City Clerk shall certify the vote adopting this resolution.

18 ///
19 ///
20 ///
21 ///
22 ///
23 ///
24 ///
25 ///
26 ///
27 ///
28 ///

Lower San Gabriel River - Recreation and Park District Draft Boundary



Attachment B



SB886 Lower San Gabriel River Recreation and Park District

FAQ

1) What is the purpose of SB886 Lower San Gabriel River Recreation and Park District?

The purpose of this bill is to create a special district to help facilitate the construction, improvement, and maintenance of parks and recreational facilities along the Lower San Gabriel River. This bill establishes in statute the structure of the district, but will still require formation through the local LAFCO, thereby preserving local control.

2) What is the biggest barrier to new parks development?

The single biggest barrier to development of new parks is a lack of funding. California voters approved a state “water bond” (Proposition 1) in 2014 and a state “park bond” (Proposition 68) in 2018 to provide funding opportunities for the revitalization of the Lower Los Angeles River watershed, including \$87.5m in grant in direct allocations and \$19m in FY 18/19 State Budget funds to the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) through both bonds for urban creek restoration and park and open space development. But those funds are limited to acquisition and development of facilities with some allocations for planning, technical assistance, and community access programming, and cannot be used for operation or maintenance of park facilities. A lack of local resources often means that parks cannot be developed, or if they are, they cannot be properly maintained.

3) What is the benefit of creating the Lower San Gabriel River Recreation and Park District?

The Lower San Gabriel River flows through many disadvantaged communities, where residents are disproportionately impacted by poor air quality from congested transportation corridors and suffer from a severe lack of access to recreational opportunities and outdoor park space.

This District will help to promote the development of open space and parks for the benefit of communities along the Lower San Gabriel River. While the Lower San Gabriel River serves

an important purpose as a flood protection and control channel, it also presents a unique opportunity for open space, urban greening, and as a recreational resource for the region.

4) How will the newly formed District be able to identify funding to fulfill the District's mission?

One of the unique powers a special district has is the ability to leverage funding by fee assessment to fund new parks, conduct a property tax transfer upon approval of the members, the ability to acquire and improve property, and the ability to operate and maintain parks.

Funding for these purposes is currently from limited sources such as bonds (i.e. Proposition 1), and often includes limitations – funds cannot be spent to improve or maintain existing resources. Local, state, and federal grants, and public private partnerships and other resources can be explored for additional funds to operate and maintain parks.

5) How does the county calculate the property tax transfer percentage to the district? And will it be taken from the existing pool?

No funding will come from the LA County's open space district fund. The property tax transfer percentage will be determined if and when the cities enters negotiation to contribute some of their property tax revenues to the district.

6) Who determines the boundaries for the District's jurisdiction?

SB 886 establishes the Board of Directors of the district, made up of one public member appointed by the Los Angeles County board of Supervisors, RMC Executive Officer, one public member appointed by the initial Board of Director, one public member appointed by the Governor, and one representative appointed by each of the following cities: City of Downey, City of Whittier, City of Pico Rivera , City of Norwalk, City of Santa Fe Springs, City of Artesia, City of Bellflower, City of Cerritos, City of Lakewood, City of Hawaiian Gardens, and The City of Long Beach.

This bill allows the board to determine the district's mission.

7) Will cities along the Lower San Gabriel River have local control over their respective project?

Yes, the cities will continue to have local control over their projects in the Lower San Gabriel River. This also includes projects voted by the Board of Directors of the District. The final decision will be made by the local authority.

8) The size and proportion of the San Gabriel River in each city vary, so how will funding be allocated?

The board of directors will make the decisions once the board is formed.

9) How will private land be impacted by the Lower San Gabriel River Recreation and Park District?

The District do not have additional rights over private land. The private sector partner will have to be a willing partner, including for the acquisition of land.

10) What will the Board of Director function?

Once the Board of Directors are established, they can determine the function of the District by developing by-laws.