

April 5, 2022

**R-20**

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
City of Long Beach  
California

**RECOMMENDATION:**

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

**DISCUSSION**

*Background*

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. A study by the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, however, identified the region surrounding the Lower Los Angeles (LA) River as one of the most park-poor areas in Los Angeles County. While the countywide average of park space is already low at 3.3 acres per 1,000 residents, the report found that some areas along the Lower LA River have as little as 0.3 park acres per 1,000 residents.

The single greatest barrier to new park space along the Lower LA River is lack of funding and resources. 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. But 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 LA River serves an important purpose as a flood protection and control channel, it also presents a unique opportunity for open space and urban greening and as a recreational resource for the region. With numerous recent developments, including the creation of a Lower Los Angeles River Working Group to develop a revitalization plan and the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan, there is growing local interest in transformation of the LA River. The City has also led efforts such as the Park Acquisition Feasibility Report, distributed to Council on April 5, 2021, to evaluate the feasibility of acquiring and developing park space along the LA River.

*Lower Los Angeles River Recreation and Park District*

As a regional challenge, lack of park space and access to the Lower LA River requires a regional solution. Recognizing the myriad challenges jurisdictions face in coordinating park projects and funding along the LA River, in 2016, former Senator Ricardo Lara authored Senate Bill 1374 authorizing the formation of the Lower Los Angeles River Recreation and Park District (District). The purpose of the District would be to advance park developments, activities, and programming along the Lower LA River that exceed the boundaries of individual cities.

The initial legislation specified which members would comprise the initial District Board and set a deadline for the formation of the District by January 1, 2020. In 2021, Senate Bill 268 further expanded the scope of the Board membership and extended the deadline to form the District by January 1, 2024. The District Board would be comprised of seventeen members in total, including three members of the public appointed by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and the fourteen Cities whose boundaries include a portion of the Lower Los Angeles River or the Rio Hondo: Bell, Bell Gardens, Commerce, Compton, Cudahy, Downey, Long Beach, Lynwood, Maywood, Montebello, Paramount, Pico Rivera, South Gate, and Vernon.

The proposed boundaries of the District align with recent LA River studies, including the Lower LA River Revitalization Plan, County Master Plan, and River Ranger Public Safety and Program Plan. District boundaries are anticipated to extend based on parcels one mile from the LA River following major roadways. A draft map is attached (Attachment A), 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 District is intended to help promote the development of open space and parks for the benefit of communities along the Lower LA River by increasing interjurisdictional coordination and resources. The District can assist with organizing activities and programs such as a River Ranger program to provide public safety. It can also support capital improvements, development projects, and park maintenance through additional funding opportunities, including joint District grant applications, philanthropy, public-private partnerships, and service fee and tax transfer structures. While most existing funds for parks are limited to acquisition or development, the District could bring more flexible resources to use for ongoing costs.

Furthermore, the RMC has committed to assisting with the establishment of the District and to provide administrative support for the Board over at least a three-year period. Cities within the District would continue to have local control over their park projects along the Lower LA River, including projects that are voted on and supported by the District Board; final decisions would still be made by the local authority. Once the District is formed, the Board will determine the structure of the organization moving forward and will outline the District priorities. Any decisions regarding a property tax transfer would require voter approval, and funding would be distributed within the District.

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Staff recommends the City Council approve the attached Resolution supporting the formation of the District through the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) process. While SB 1374 and SB 268 described above establish the membership of the District's Board of Directors and with this legislative authority the District may be formed without members providing a resolution in support, all member Cities except Compton, Vernon, and Long Beach have submitted resolutions in support of the District.

Staff further recommends that the City advocate for Board representation to be weighted according to population and geographic territory represented along the LA River. The initial Board would comprise 17 members, each with one vote. Since the City represents as much as one-third of the Lower LA 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 review by Anita Lakhani on March 10, 2022, and by Budget Operations and Development Officer Rhutu Amin Gharib on March 7, 2022.

### 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 in Spring 2022.

### FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation is to adopt a Resolution in support of the formation of the Lower Los Angeles River Recreation and Park District and approve the district boundaries on behalf of the City. This recommendation has no fiscal impact beyond the budgeted scope of duties and is consistent with City Council priorities.

The RMC has dedicated funding and staff resources to manage the formation process on behalf of the member jurisdictions. The resulting fiscal impact once the District Board is formed would require City representation including an elected representative to serve on the Board and a minimal level of staff resources

The long-term fiscal impacts of District Board participation are unknown. The Board, initially consisting of 17-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 expected that the Board will recommend a fee assessment. The cost of a possible fee assessment is unknown at this time. Voter approval would be required for taxes applied within the District. The Department would return to City Council for

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land use approval on any future projects recommended by the Board within the City's boundaries. There is no local job impact associated with this recommendation.

**SUGGESTED ACTION:**

Approve recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,



**BRENT DENNIS**  
**DIRECTOR OF PARKS, RECREATION & MARINE**

ATTACHMENTS – RESOLUTION

ATTACHMENT A – PARK DISTRICT MAP

ATTACHMENT B – FAQ

APPROVED:



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**THOMAS B. MODICA**  
**CITY MANAGER**

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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 LOS ANGELES RIVER  
RECREATION AND PARKS DISTRICT

WHEREAS, in September of 2016, California Senate Bill 1374, sponsored by  
Senator Ricardo Lara, was signed into law authorizing the formation of the Lower Los  
Angeles River Recreation and Parks District (District); and

WHEREAS, the Lower Los Angeles River flows 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 Los Angeles River  
represent low income communities which are some of the most park-poor areas in Los  
Angeles County, lacking the resources to fund, develop, maintain and operate the parks  
and recreational opportunities that their residents need; and

WHEREAS, with numerous recent developments, including the creation of a  
Lower Los Angeles River Working Group to develop a revitalization plan, the City's Los  
Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan, and multiple conversations about a new vision  
for the river, there is a growing local interest in transformation of the river; and

WHEREAS, development and maintenance of a safe, attractive and vibrant  
recreation zone along the Lower Los Angeles River will require coordination of activities,

1 maintenance, public safety and planning across multiple jurisdictions and is beyond the  
2 capabilities of any one city; and

3 WHEREAS, the City of Long Beach has significant interest in the continued  
4 development of recreational opportunities for all residents, including facilities and activities  
5 which utilize and enhance this important resource and which improves access to the Lower  
6 Los Angeles River for everyone; and

7 WHEREAS, the proposed annexation is categorically exempt from the  
8 California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section  
9 20, as a change in the organization of local agencies, and the Categorical Exemption was  
10 adopted by the City of South Gate, as lead agency, on March 26, 2019.

11 NOW, THEREFORE, the City Council of the City of Long Beach resolves as  
12 follows:

13 Section 1. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption  
14 by the City Council, and the City Clerk shall certify the vote adopting this resolution.

15 Section 2. This resolution is hereby adopted and approved by the City of  
16 Long Beach in support the City of South Gate’s application for formation of the Lower Los  
17 Angeles River Recreation and Parks District as authorized and in the manner provided by  
18 the Cortese-Know-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000.

19 Section 3. The City of Long Beach will cooperate with the formation of the  
20 District and is requesting to be included within the District as outlined in Senate Bill 1374  
21 and as indicated on the finalized District Boundary Map

22 Section 4. The City Clerk of the City of Long Beach is hereby authorized  
23 and directed to file a certified copy of this Resolution with the Executive Officer of the Local  
24 Agency Formation Commission for the County of Los Angeles.

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I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was adopted by the City Council  
of the City of Long Beach at its meeting of \_\_\_\_\_, 2022, by the following vote:

Ayes: Councilmembers: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

Noes: Councilmembers: \_\_\_\_\_

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Absent: Councilmembers: \_\_\_\_\_

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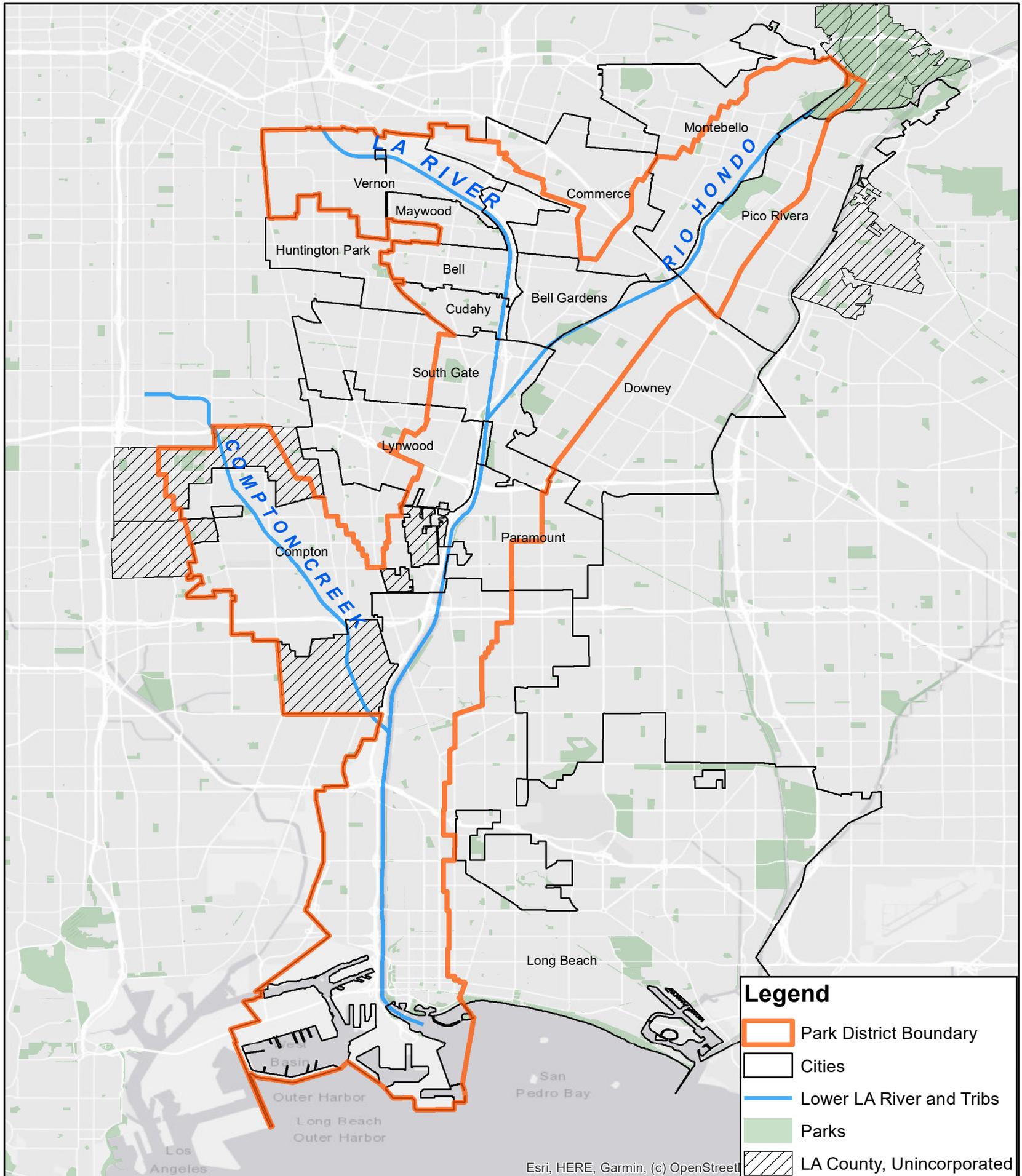
Recusal(s): Councilmembers: \_\_\_\_\_

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City Clerk

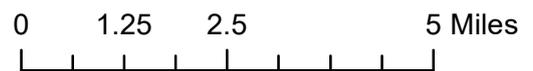
OFFICE OF THE CITY ATTORNEY  
CHARLES PARKIN, City Attorney  
411 W. Ocean Boulevard, 9th Floor  
Long Beach, CA 90802

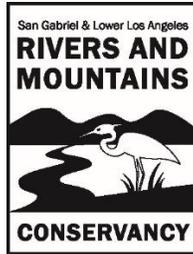
# FORMATION NO. 2019-06 OF THE LOWER LOS ANGELES RIVER RECREATION & PARK DISTRICT



**DRAFT**  
12/11/19

**Attachment A**





## **SB1374 Lower Los Angeles River Recreation and Park District**

### **FAQ**

#### **1) What is the purpose of SB1374 Lower Los Angeles 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 Los Angeles 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 Los Angeles River Recreation and Park District?**

The Lower LA River flows 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.

This District will help to promote the development of open space and parks for the benefit of communities along the Lower LA River. While the Lower LA 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. With numerous

recent developments, including the development of the Lower Los Angeles River Revitalization Plan, the City's Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan, the County's Los Angeles River Master Plan update, and multiple conversations about a new vision for the river, there is a growing local interest and opportunity to transform the river.

Furthermore, The River Ranger Program (AB1158) can be implemented within the District, to better foster connections between communities, agencies, and resources to promote safe, equitable usage and stewardship of the Los Angeles River and its tributaries. And it can serve as a model for the formation of the Lower San Gabriel River Recreation and Park District (SB693).

**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. 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) What is RMC's role in the formation of the Lower LA River Recreation and Park District?**

According to SB1372, if the Park District is formed, then it must coordinate with the Lower Los Angeles River Working Group and the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy to fulfill the duties established by this bill.

RMC will commit to funding a staff position and provide administrative support for 3 years. The staff member will report directly to RMC. The named cities in SB 1374 are encouraged to commit additional funding, or in-kind contributions, to support the duties and goals of the Lower LA River Recreation and Park District.

**7) Who determines the boundaries for the District's jurisdiction?**

SB 1374 (Lara) establishes the Board of Directors of the district, made up of three public members, appointed by the Los Angeles County board of Supervisors, one representative appointed by each of the following cities: City of Vernon, City of Maywood, City of Bell, City of Bell Gardens, City of Cudahy, City of South Gate, City of Lynwood, City of Compton, City of Paramount, City of Long Beach. Previously, one representative would jointly be appointed by the cities of Commerce, Downey, Montebello, and Pico Rivera. The SB268 (Archuleta) amendment would allow one representative to be appointed by each of the following cities: City of Commerce, City of Downey, City of Montebello, and City of Pico Rivera.

The bill allows the board, made up of representatives from the Los Angeles County and each of the cities to determine the districts mission.

**8) Will cities along the Lower LA River have local control over their respective project?**

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

**9) The size and proportion of the LA River in each city vary, so how will funding be allocated?**

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

**10) How will private land be impacted by the Lower LA River Recreation and Park District?**

The Park 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.

**11) What will the Board of Director function?**

Once the District is formed, the Board of Director shall consist of no more than 17 members as follow:

The city council of each of the following cities may appoint one representative:

- (1) The City of Vernon.
- (2) The City of Maywood.

- (3) The City of Bell.
- (4) The City of Bell Gardens.
- (5) The City of Cudahy.
- (6) The City of South Gate.
- (7) The City of Lynwood.
- (8) The City of Compton.
- (9) The City of Paramount.
- (10) The City of Long Beach.
- (11) The City of Commerce.
- (12) The City of Downey.
- (13) The City of Montebello.
- (14) The City of Pico Rivera.

(b) The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors may appoint three public members. One of those members shall be a representative of a nonprofit organization serving the Lower Los Angeles River region.

(c) Except as provided in subdivision (d), a person appointed to the board of directors shall serve at the pleasure of the city council or county board of supervisors that made the appointment.

The representative appointed pursuant to this subdivision shall serve for a two-year term.

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