



PUBLIC NOTICE

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT**

BUILDING STRONG®

Proposed Re-Authorization of an
Existing In-Lieu Fee Program

Public Notice/Application No.: SPL-2003-01214-BEM

Program: San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy In-Lieu Fee Program

Comment Period: November 27, 2012 through December 27, 2012

Project Manager: Brianne McGuffie; 213-452-3419; Brianne.E.McGuffie@usace.army.mil

Program Sponsor

San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy
Ann Croissant, Ph.D.
President/Board of Directors
P.O. Box 963
Glendora, California 91740

Location

The Program service area would encompass the following watersheds:

- San Gabriel River Watershed (Counties of Los Angeles and Orange)
- Rio Hondo watershed (Los Angeles County)

Activity

To modify the existing San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy In-Lieu Fee ("ILF") Program ("Program") pursuant to the requirements of the Corps-EPA Compensatory Mitigation Rule¹ (33 CFR 332.8(d)) ("Mitigation Rule"), as well as to expand the Program's service area to include the entire Rio Honda watershed (see attached map). For more information refer to the following pages of this notice. Supporting documents are either attached or available at the address below.

Interested parties are hereby notified that a Prospectus has been received in order to re-authorize an existing ILF Program for the purpose of mitigating impacts to waters of the United States authorized, or enforcement actions resolved, under section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Interested parties are invited to provide their comments on the proposed re-authorization of this Program, which will become a part of the record and will be considered as part of this proposal.

¹ The mitigation rule was promulgated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at 33 C.F.R. Part 332 and 40 C.F.R. Part 230, respectively.

Comments should be mailed to:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Los Angeles District, Regulatory Division
Attn: Brianne McGuffie, Project Manager
Los Angeles District Office
915 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90017

Alternatively, comments can be sent electronically to: Brianne.E.McGuffie@usace.army.mil

Background

The San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy (“Conservancy”) has requested the Corps re-authorize the Program. If re-authorized, this Program would continue to receive monies from individuals or entities (“project proponent”) receiving Corps authorization under section 404 of the Clean Water Act and, when appropriate, to resolve Section 404 enforcement actions within the proposed service area (see attached maps).

The Conservancy (www.sgmrc.org) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, public benefit corporation established in 1997 for the purpose of stewarding lands and aquatic resources through open space planning, land acquisition, and resources protection. As a regional environmental organization located in the foothill area of the eastern San Gabriel Valley, it is specifically concerned with land conservation, planning, special studies, watershed management (enhancement, restoration and protection), land management, and education. Since its establishment, the Conservancy has been successful in establishing a number of local conservancies in the San Gabriel Valley. The Conservancy maintains working partnerships with organizations and agencies including the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, California Regional Water Quality Control Boards, River & Mountain Conservancy, California State Polytechnic University Pomona, Southern California Edison, and Angeles National Forest, and the Los Angeles County Fire Department. Due to these partnerships and efforts, over 2,000 acres of open space have been strategically targeted to protect watershed, regional wildlife, open space corridors and mutual resource protection for multiple purposes. Additionally, the Conservancy is responsible for undertaking the most comprehensive study of the San Gabriel River Watershed to date. The study, titled “Reconnecting the San Gabriel Valley: A Planning Approach for the Creation of Interconnected Urban Wildlife Corridor Networks” was completed by a university/land conservancy coalition in 2000.

To ensure adherence to the federal “no net loss” goal, funded projects would generally be allocated toward the restoration, establishment, and enhancement of riparian/freshwater wetland habitats. The SGMRC may use Program funds for aquatic habitat acquisition or preservation, provided the projects include an explicit restoration, enhancement, and/or creation component, or provided the proposed preservation area is under clear threat of direct loss to aquatic resource functions and values.

Project goals and objectives linked to no net loss planning include a variety of aspects of assessment, development, enhancement, and establishment. For example, the following objectives are incorporated into the Prospectus:

- Assessment of ecologically appropriate stream, riparian, wetland, and adjacent upland restoration and enhancement opportunities in the San Gabriel River and Rio Hondo Watersheds;

- Development and implementation of plans that protect healthier sub-watershed areas through zoning, easement or purchase;
- Enhancement, restoration, and monitoring of impacted sub-watershed areas; and, as appropriate,
- Creation of publicly accessible areas that promote watershed education opportunities.

The Conservancy has prepared and implemented plans, projects, and partnerships for invasive species eradication in aquatic habitats near Bonelli Park in the City of San Dimas, Lemon Creek in the City of Walnut, and Big Dalton and Little Dalton Creeks in the City of Glendora. Upland and woodland restoration projects have included Bluebird Mountain and Colby Trail in the City of Glendora and in partnering roles with other Conservancies and Conservancy-owned lands. Land purchase, protection, and preservation projects have included Green Valley near Lake Hughes.

The Conservancy operates nature centers in partnership with other entities at Santa Fe Dam, Irwindale; Galster Wilderness Park, West Covina; and Glendora Conservancy, Glendora. The Santa Fe Dam Nature Center focuses on alluvial fan sage scrub within the San Gabriel River, while Galster Park protects coastal sage scrub and walnut woodland communities, and Glendora Conservancy protects coastal sage scrub, grasslands, and coast live oak/Engelmann oak woodland communities, including rare and endangered species.

Mitigation Approval and Permitting Processes

Mitigation requirements for a particular project are negotiated between the project proponent and the Corps. The project proponent must therefore first submit a mitigation proposal to the Corps that describes the proposed use of an ILF Program or Mitigation Bank. If appropriate credits are not available at a Mitigation Bank located within the service area, and the Corps determines that the Program is the most appropriate approach to mitigation implementation, then the project proponent would contact the Program sponsor to discuss mitigation options. The Program sponsor would review copies of all permits issued to the project proponent and then submit a proposal to the project proponent, including the estimated cost of the proposed mitigation work. Prior to acceptance of payment (“credit sale”), the Program sponsor would also contact the Corps in order to verify the Corps’ requirements.

Upon receipt of payment, the Program sponsor becomes legally responsible for initiating the necessary mitigation and monitoring within three growing seasons of receipt of payment. During this time, the Program sponsor would submit a complete Mitigation Plan² to the Corps and Interagency Review Team (IRT)³ as well as an application for Corps permit(s)⁴ should the proposed in-lieu fee mitigation project activities involve a discharge of dredge or fill material within waters of the U.S. or work within navigable waters of the U.S. The Corps would complete consultation, as appropriate, under the Endangered Species Act, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the National Historic Preservation Act and other applicable laws, prior to any permit authorization. Program funds would be held in a Program account, and all credit sales would be tracked and reported by the Program sponsor to the Corps at a minimum on an annual basis, and also uploaded to the Corps’ Regulatory In-lieu Fee and Banking Information Tracking System (RIBITS). To ensure

² The content of a complete Mitigation Plan is described in the Mitigation Rule, at 33 CFR 332.4(c)(2-14).

³ The Interagency Review Team (IRT) consists of member Agencies, and may include U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, California Department of Fish and Game, and Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board

⁴ The proposed mitigation activities may also require separate approvals from the Regional Water Quality Control Board and California Department of Fish and Game.

permanent protection of the Program mitigation sites, the Program sponsor would secure in-perpetuity conservation easements or grant deed restrictions to be recorded at the appropriate County's Registry of Deeds.

The Corps is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, state, and local agencies and officials; Indian tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts and benefits of the proposed re-authorization of the Program. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps to determine whether the proposal has the potential to provide mitigation opportunities for permittees authorized to impact waters of the U.S. under section 404 of the Clean Water Act or as a means of resolving Section 404 enforcement actions.

Additional details are provided in the attached Prospectus. The Prospectus is also available at the Corps' Los Angeles District office at the address above.

Additional details are provided in the Prospectus, available in the *Cyber Repository for Mountains Restoration Trust ILF Program* on Los Angeles District's list of pending ILF Programs under *ILF Programs* on the Corps' Regulatory In-lieu Fee and Bank Information Tracking System (RIBITS) site: <http://geo.usace.army.mil/ribits/index.html>.

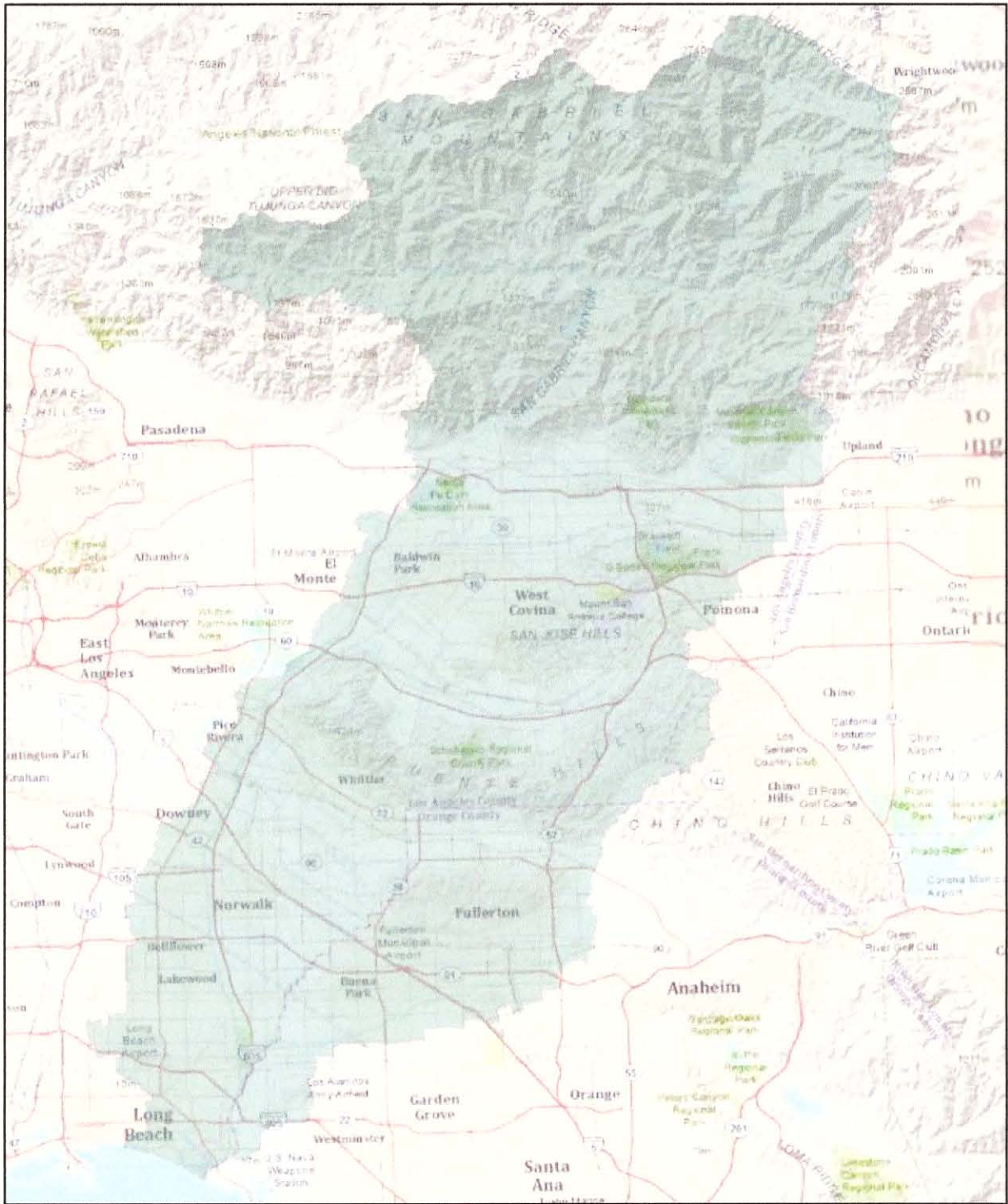
For additional information please contact Brianne McGuffie via phone at 213-452-3419 or via e-mail at Brianne.E.McGuffie@usace.army.mil. This public notice is issued by the Chief, Regulatory Division.



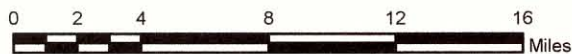
Regulatory Program Goals:

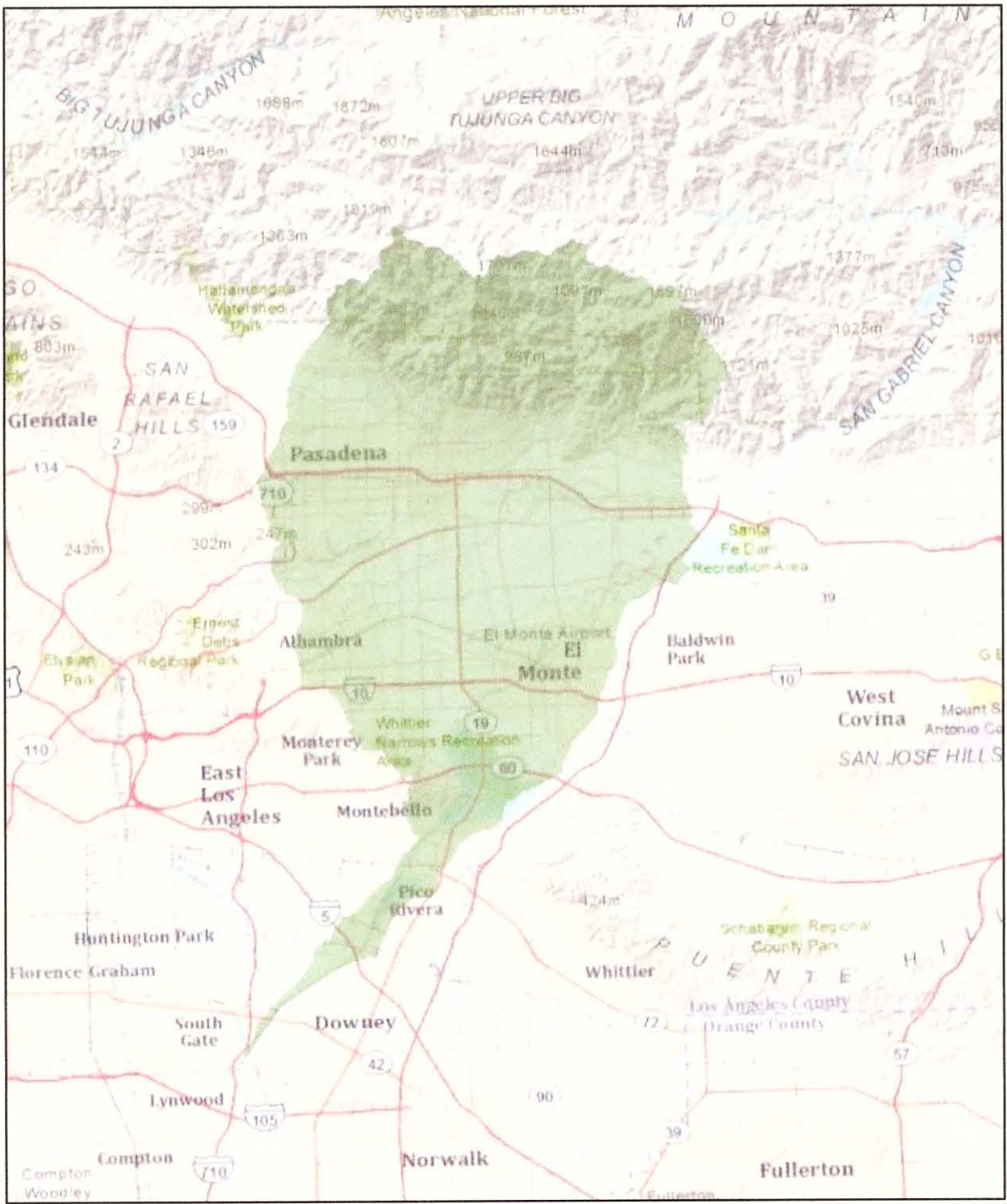
- To provide strong protection of the nation's aquatic environment, including wetlands.
- To ensure the Corps provides the regulated public with fair and reasonable decisions.
- To enhance the efficiency of the Corps' administration of its regulatory program.

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS – LOS ANGELES DISTRICT
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
VENTURA FIELD OFFICE
2151 ALESSANDRO DRIVE, SUITE 110
VENTURA, CALIFORNIA 93001





MAP 1. SAN GABRIEL RIVER WATERSHED





MAP 2. RIO HONDO WATERSHED

0 1.25 2.5 5 7.5 10 Miles

**SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS
REGIONAL CONSERVANCY**

SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS REGIONAL CONSERVANCY

IN-LIEU FEE PROGRAM PROSPECTUS

The San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, public benefit corporation established in 1997 for the purpose stewarding lands and aquatic resources through open space planning, land acquisition, and resources protection. As a regional environmental organization located in the foothill area of the eastern San Gabriel Valley, it is specifically concerned with land conservation, planning, special studies, watershed management (enhancement, restoration and protection), land management, and education.

The SGMRC has been very successful in establishing a number of local conservancies in the San Gabriel Valley. The general mission, purposes and successes of the conservancies of the San Gabriel Valley have attracted significant and continuing partnering efforts with other organizations and agencies. Among these are, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, Regional Water Quality Control Board, Rivers & Mountains Conservancy, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, Southern California Edison, and Angeles National Forest, and the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

The San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy is responsible for undertaking the most comprehensive study of the San Gabriel River Watershed to date. The study, titled Reconnecting the San Gabriel Valley: A Planning Approach for the Creation of Interconnected urban Wildlife Corridor Networks was completed by a university/land conservancy coalition in 2000. It laid the foundation for a watershed-wide management strategy by specifically identifying key partnerships, funding, and solutions for local and regional watershed management projects in the Upper Watershed of the San Gabriel River. The document has since served as a starting point and catalyst for numerous projects aimed at enhancing and restoring key segments of the San Gabriel River watershed.

The SGMRC has prepared plans for invasive species eradication in aquatic habitats near Bonelli Park and has undertaken a comprehensive enhancement and invasive removal project on Lemon Creek in the City of Walnut. The SGMRC operates nature centers at Santa Fe Dam and Galster Wilderness Park. The Santa Fe Dam Nature Center focuses alluvial sage scrub within the San Gabriel River, while Galster Park protects coastal sage scrub and walnut woodland communities.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The overarching objectives for management of the San Gabriel River Watershed are contained within the SGMRC's study, Reconnecting the San Gabriel Valley (2000) and the numerous specific watershed management plans such as the Watershed Management Plan for the San Gabriel River above Whittier Narrows (2002). Objectives include:

- Assessment of ecologically appropriate stream, riparian, wetland, and adjacent upland restoration and enhancement opportunities in the San Gabriel River and Rio Hondo Watersheds;
- Development and implementation of plans that protect healthier sub-watershed areas through zoning, easement or purchase;

- Enhancement, restoration, and monitoring of impacted sub-watershed areas; and, as appropriate,
- Creation of publicly accessible areas that promote watershed education opportunities.

Individual projects undertaken by the SGMRC typically incorporate all or many of the above-described objectives at the sub-watershed level. Within Lemon Creek, for example, SGMRC employed ILF funds to remove invasive species, to modify natural extant vegetation in order to improve light penetration through the canopy and into the understory, to improve overall water quality, and to improve visual access to the stream from established trails. The SGMRC has also developed comprehensive plans to eradicate invasive species within portions of the watershed near Bonelli Park.

The ILF program seeks to implement education on public and private lands, by working cooperatively with owners and planners to develop and inform watershed-based zoning, create buffers, and by promoting site designs that reduce sedimentation and erosion through stormwater best management practices. In cooperation with agencies and partners, the SGMRC seeks to capitalize on its extensive technical resources to establish long-term financial and legal mechanisms that ensure ILF project and program success.

PROGRAM ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION

The SGMRC is comprised of a board of scientific, technical, legal, and financial experts committed to ensuring compliance with the ILF program. The SGMRC deposits funds received under the ILF program into a restricted account, exclusive to the ILF program, at a Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) bank. The funds are exclusively for project-related activities, including habitat enhancement, resource protection, restoration projects, and land acquisition.

Potential candidate sites for ILF program are prioritized by reach and rehabilitation or protection urgency as determined by the board's team of technical experts, including biologists, wetland scientists, hydrologists, and engineers. In accordance with Corps requirements, including the Mitigation Rule (33 CFR 332.4(c)(2-14)), SGMRC specialists prepare compensatory mitigation plans that describe the restoration area and proposed activities. Site success criteria are set and project success monitored for a minimum of five years, but up to ten years following project implementation. Site performance will be measured through traditional vegetative sampling methods as well as an appropriate functional or conditional assessment method (e.g., California Rapid Assessment Method (CRAM)).

SERVICE AREA

The existing ILF covers the San Gabriel River watershed area. The proposed service area for the ILF will also include the Rio Hondo watershed. Maps 1 and 2 illustrate the service areas for the ILF.

GENERAL NEED AND TECHNICAL

Over three million people live in the San Gabriel Valley and regional populations have steadily over the past several decades, placing increasing pressure on our local watersheds and associated natural resources. Proposed local and regional development plans indicate continued growth and urbanization. The San Gabriel River and Rio Hondo watersheds span over 37 cities and are approximately 26% developed. The technical feasibility of protecting and restoring the streams that comprise the watershed remains high, because many of the streams remain unlined, are in a relatively natural state, and maintain all or much of their native vegetation and associated wildlife.

OWNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS AND LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT

The SGMRC purchases and manages properties and works with other entities to manage properties within the watersheds in its purview. This is done in a manner consistent with species and watershed management plans such as the Watershed Management Plan for the Upper San Gabriel River Above Whittier Narrows (<http://www.sgmrc.org/watershed/html>). The development of the draft Plan was supported in part through a grant provided by the State Water Resources Control Board pursuant to the Costa-Machado Water Act of 2000 (Proposition 13) targeting state-wide watershed protection. Primary consultant for the Plan was Camp Dresser & McKee (CDM). Specific and pertinent Planning Elements in Decision-Making include

- Mountains to Narrows Characteristics and Features
- Water Resources and Water Quality
- Water Issues and Water Quality Monitoring
- Habitat Characterization and Connectivity
- Environmental Quality
- Parks and Recreation
- Land Use and Planning
- Environmental Stewardship
- Watershed Issues
- Watershed Stakeholders
- Watershed Management
- Urban/Wildlands Interface
- Resources and References
- Reconnecting the San Gabriel Valley
- Regional Conversations & Dialogues:
 - WIN (Watershed Integrated Network)
 - Collaboration on Grants and Funding: Projects and Models
 - Workshops: General, or Specified Audiences

To ensure permanent protection of these compensatory mitigation sites, the SGMRC or a qualified organization designated by the SGMRC and approved by the Corps shall obtain and record at the Los Angeles County Registry of Deeds in-perpetuity conservation easements or deed restrictions on each compensatory mitigation site prior to compensatory mitigation site construction. The conservation easements and deed restrictions shall not be recorded until approved in writing by the Corps. The SGMRC shall immediately forward to the Corps copies of the recorded conservation easements or deed restrictions

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE SPONSOR TO SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE THE TYPE(S) OF MITIGATION PROJECT(S) PROPOSED:

The Conservancy (www.sgmrc.org) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, public benefit corporation established in 1997 for the purpose of stewarding lands and aquatic resources through open space planning, land acquisition, and resources protection. The Conservancy maintains working partnerships with organizations and agencies including the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, California Regional Water Quality Control Boards, River & Mountain Conservancy, California State Polytechnic University Pomona, Southern California Edison, and Angeles National Forest, and the Los Angeles County Fire Department. Due to these partnerships and efforts, over 2,000 acres of

open space have been strategically targeted to protect watershed, regional wildlife, open space corridors and mutual resource protection for multiple purposes. Additionally, the Conservancy is responsible for undertaking the most comprehensive study of the San Gabriel River Watershed to date. The study, titled “Reconnecting the San Gabriel Valley: A Planning Approach for the Creation of Interconnected Urban Wildlife Corridor Networks” was completed by a university/land conservancy coalition in 2000. The Conservancy has prepared plans for invasive species eradication in aquatic habitats near Bonelli Park in the City of San Dimas and Lemon Creek in the City of Walnut. The Conservancy operates nature centers at Santa Fe Dam and Galster Wilderness Park. The Santa Fe Dam Nature Center focuses alluvial sage scrub within the San Gabriel River, while Galster Park protects coastal sage scrub and walnut woodland communities.

COMPENSATION PLANNING FRAMEWORK

- i. The geographic service area(s) including a watershed-based rationale for the delineation of each service area.
 - The existing ILF covers the San Gabriel River watershed area. The proposed service area for the ILF will also include the Rio Hondo watershed. Maps 1 and 2 illustrate the service areas for the ILF. Watersheds provide among the largest corridors and linkages of relatively undisturbed habitat in the region. The San Gabriel River watershed drains into the San Gabriel River from the San Gabriel Mountains flowing 58 miles south until its confluence with the Pacific Ocean. Major tributaries to the San Gabriel River include Walnut Creek, San Jose Creek, Coyote Creek, and numerous storm drains entering from the 19 cities that the San Gabriel River passes through (<http://ladpw.org/wmd/watershed/sg/>). Channel flows pass through different sections in the San Gabriel River, diverting from the riverbed into four different spreading grounds, held behind several rubber dams for controlled flow and ground water recharge, and controlled through 10 miles of concrete channel bottom from below Whittier Narrows Dam to past Coyote Creek (<http://ladpw.org/wmd/watershed/sg/>). The Rio Hondo watershed is a subwatershed of the Los Angeles River watershed and is also linked to the adjacent San Gabriel River watershed (Rio Hondo Watershed Management Plan, 2003). This link reflects both natural hydrologic processes and human intervention (Rio Hondo Watershed Management Plan, 2003). Historically, the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers were wide shallow rivers consisting of a braided series of channels that would periodically intermingle following large storm events (Rio Hondo Watershed Management Plan, 2003). As a result of this dynamic, the Rio Hondo once formed the main bed of the San Gabriel River (Rio Hondo Watershed Management Plan, 2003). Today, however, this dynamic has been engineered into three channels have been created to bring water from the San Gabriel to the Rio Hondo, making the Rio Hondo serve as a distributary for the San Gabriel River (Rio Hondo Watershed Management Plan, 2003).
- ii. A description of the threats to aquatic resources in the service area(s), including how the in-lieu fee program will help offset impacts resulting from those threats.
 - Over three million people live in the San Gabriel Valley and regional populations have steadily grown over the past several decades, placed increasing pressure on our local watersheds and associated natural resources. Increasing population, the uncertainty of imported water supplies, and the possibility of extended droughts are all threats to the San Gabriel River and Rio Hondo watersheds. Proposed local and regional development plans indicate continued growth and urbanization. In-Lieu Fee projects will seek to preserve, maintain and as appropriate enhance existing site functions and values. ILF funds are used exclusively for project-related activities,

including habitat enhancement, resource protection, restoration projects, and land acquisition. Additionally, the Conservancy will establish long-term financial and legal mechanisms that ensure ILF project and program success.

- iii. An analysis of historic aquatic resources loss in the service area(s).
- The Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP), in cooperation with its technical partners (below) and the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project (WRP) performed a study of the San Gabriel Watershed in 2007 (<http://www.sccwrp.org/ResearchAreas/Wetlands/HistoricalEcology/CoastalWatershedHistoricalEcology/SanGabrielRiverHistoricalEcology.aspx>.) According to this study, the San Gabriel river floodplain historically supported at least 47,000 acres (19,000 ha) of wetlands, with palustrine alkali meadows being the most common wetland type. Following wet years when the river overflowed its banks, the floodplain likely supported an additional 800-4,000 acres (300-1,600 ha) of wetlands as part of seasonal wetland/upland complexes. Development of the San Gabriel River watershed over time has resulted in extensive wetland losses. This study estimated that greater than 86% of historical wetlands have been lost since ca. 1870. Palustrine wetlands have been particularly impacted, with most of the perennial and intermittent ponds and marshes no longer present. Of particular note is the loss of the vast alkali meadows, which were once the most common type of wetland in the lower watershed, but are now totally absent from the landscape. Channelization and other flood control measures have resulted in conversion of the meandering and braided channel systems to linear flood control conduits. Similarly, the complex of seasonal floodplain wetlands has been almost entirely lost.
- iv. An analysis of current aquatic resource conditions in the service area(s), supported by an appropriate level of field documentation.
- The watersheds are located in the California Chaparral and Woodlands Ecoregion, which is categorized by Mediterranean forests, woodlands and shrubs. As one of the principal valleys and river/watershed systems of southern California, the San Gabriel Valley lies to the east of the city of Los Angeles, to the north of the Puente Hills, to the south of the San Gabriel Mountains, and west of the Inland Empire. A number of plant communities exist such as the Coastal Sage Scrub, Oak Woodland, Grassland, Riparian, and Alluvial Fan Sage Scrub.

Sensitive plant species within the area include:

- Braunton's milk vetch
- California Orcutt grass
- Davidson's bush mallow
- Lewis's evening primrose
- Los Angeles sunflower
- Many-stemmed dudleya
- Narrow-leaved Brodiaea
- Nevin's barberry
- Parish's brittlescale
- Plummer's mariposa lily
- San Fernando Valley spineflower
- San Gabriel linanthus
- Slender-horned spineflower
- Southern tarplant

Sensitive wildlife species within the area include:

- Arroyo chub
- Arroyo toad
- California mastiff bat
- Coastal California gnatcatcher
- Least Bell's vireo
- Long-eared myotis
- Mountain yellow-legged frog
- Orange-throated whiptail
- Pale big-eared bat
- Pallid bat
- San Diego coast horned lizard
- Santa Ana speckled dace
- Santa Ana sucker
- Silvery legless lizard
- Spotted bat
- Western pond turtle
- Western spadefoot toad
- Yellow-billed cuckoo
- Yuma myotis

In the northern portion of the ILF service area, steep topography characterizes the San Gabriels (part of the Transverse Ranges) that rise to a maximum elevation of over 10,000 feet at Mount San Antonio (Mount Baldy). The San Gabriels are bounded by the San Andreas Fault to the north and the Sierra Madre fault zone to the south. This position has caused north-south compression along the San Andreas tectonic plate boundary which has contributed substantially to the range's ongoing uplift.

Canyon bottoms within the San Gabriel foothills and adjacent alluvial fans consist of sediments coincident in age with the rise of the San Gabriel Mountains. The alluvium found in these areas consists of unconsolidated gravel, sand, silt and clay derived of granitic parent material found at higher elevations to the north. Upper alluvium consists of loose to moderately dense silty sand underlain by moderately dense or gravelly sand.

As mentioned in the above section, field documentation at potential ILF mitigation sites would help inform appropriate site selection and potential restoration, enhancement, and preservation opportunities. For example, on-site assessment of geomorphology, hydrology, soils, and vegetation is often necessary to establish restoration goals and prioritize potential mitigation sites.

Further south the San Gabriel Basin is dominated by unconsolidated to semi-consolidated alluvium deposited by streams flowing out of the San Gabriel Mountains. This porous alluvium can be several hundred feet deep and provides a highly permeable connection between the surface and the aquifer. As a result, much of the river flows underground southward from the mountains below the San Gabriel Valley.

The Los Angeles coastal plain extends from the Whittier Narrows to the Pacific Ocean and consists largely of Pleistocene- to Holocene-aged alluvium deposited from the San Gabriel River to marine sediments deposited during periodic encroachment of the sea. The primary native soil type in the Los Angeles Coastal Plain is sandy loam.

- v. A statement of aquatic resource goals and objectives for each service area, including a description of the general amounts, types and locations of aquatic resources the program will seek to provide.

The Program's ILF projects seek to preserve, maintain and as appropriate restore and/or enhance site functions and values. The Program's objectives include:

- Assessment of ecologically appropriate stream, riparian, wetland, and adjacent upland restoration and enhancement opportunities in the San Gabriel River and Rio Hondo Watersheds;
 - Development and implementation of plans that protect healthier sub-watershed areas through zoning, easement or purchase;
 - Enhancement, restoration, and monitoring of impacted sub-watershed areas; and, as appropriate,
 - Creation of publicly accessible areas that promote watershed education opportunities.
- The abovementioned 2007 SCCWRP Study on the San Gabriel watershed identifies opportunities for wetland restoration, despite the dramatic wetland losses. Remnant wetlands and/or wetland signatures exist at locations such as Whittier Narrows, along the base of the foothills of the San Gabriel mountains, in the upper floodplain, and at a several locations in the Long Beach area. Knowledge of landscape positions and wetland types that previously existed can help guide decisions regarding future restoration of these areas. Furthermore, the reconstructed plant community compositions generated by this study can provide templates for restoration planning. However, caution must be taken in the use of historical information. Restoration of wetland plant communities to their former historical configuration may not be possible for several reasons, including irreversible alteration of hydrology or soils, or incompatible use of adjacent lands. Thus historical analysis must be used to inform, but not replace the tools commonly used in watershed restoration science. Accordingly, on-site assessment of geomorphology, hydrology, soils, and vegetation would also help inform the Program's decisions, and would include an appropriate rapid functional or conditional assessment methodology to establish baseline conditions and future (with project) projected conditions.
- vi. A prioritization strategy for selecting and implementing compensatory mitigation activities
- Potential candidate sites for ILF program are prioritized by reach and restoration, enhancement, or protection urgency as determined by the board's team of technical experts, including biologists, wetland scientists, hydrologists, and engineers. In accordance with Corps requirements, SGMRC specialists prepare compensatory mitigation plans that describe the restoration area and proposed activities. Site success criteria are set and project success monitored for a minimum of five years, but up to ten years following project implementation.
 - Projects developed and selected for funding under the ILF Instrument shall adhere to the following selection criteria: 1) be located within the boundaries of the Corps Los Angeles District and within the San Gabriel River or Rio Hondo Watersheds; 2) Provide, to the extent appropriate and practicable, the full replacement of functions of aquatic and riparian resources impacted by the projects serving as sources of funds for the Account; 3) Generally, shall not be used to

mitigation for impacts to unique aquatic resources, such as vernal pools and eelgrass; 4) Generally be allocated toward the restoration, enhancement, and/or creation of riparian or freshwater wetland habitats. The Conservancy may use program funds for aquatic habitat acquisition or preservation, provided the projects include an explicit restoration, enhancement, and/or creation component, or provided the proposed preservation area is under clear threat of direct loss to aquatic resource functions and values (i.e. a developer has all or most permits and entitlements to build, etc.). For proposed compensatory mitigation sites containing upland components, in-lieu fee mitigation credit shall only be applied to waters of the U.S., including wetlands, and associated vegetation buffers as approved by the Corps with the following exception: credit may be given for the inclusion of upland areas occurring within a compensatory mitigation project to the degree that the protection and management of such upland areas is an enhancement of aquatic functions and increases the overall ecological functions of the mitigation project (e.g., habitat for Federal or State-listed species); 5) Be selected in accordance with applicable Federal policies and guidelines, including the 2008 Corps-EPA Compensatory Mitigation Rule (33 CFR 332.1-8); 6) Have provisions for long-term operations and maintenance, and require management and stewardship obligations be held by a responsible local, state, or federal agency or non-profit conservation organization; 7) Be given priority to the extent they provide the same habitat type and are located within a watershed as close to the site of impacted riparian/aquatic resources as practicable.

- vii. An explanation of how any preservation objective identified in paragraph (c)(2)(v) of the Corps Mitigation Rule (Part 332.8 “Mitigation banks and in-lieu fee programs”) and addressed in the prioritization strategy satisfy the criteria for use of preservation.
- The Conservancy may use program funds for aquatic habitat acquisition or preservation, provided the projects include an explicit restoration, enhancement, and/or creation component, or provided the proposed preservation area is under clear threat of direct loss to aquatic resource functions and values (i.e. a developer has all or most permits and entitlements to build, etc.).
 - Pursuant to the Rule (33 CFR 332.3(h)), preservation as the sole form of compensatory mitigation may be acceptable if:
 1. The resources to be preserved provide important physical, chemical or biological functions for the watershed.
 2. The resources to be preserved contribute significantly to ecological sustainability of the watershed.
 3. Preservation is determined to be appropriate and practicable.
 4. The resources are under threat of destruction or diverse modifications, and
 5. The preserved sites will be permanently protected through an appropriate real estate or other legal instrument (e.g. conservation assessment, title transfer to state or federal resource agency or land trust).
 - In addition, where preservation is the sole form of compensatory mitigation, compensation ratios will be higher and associated credits will be lower than projects associated with enhancement, restoration, passive regeneration, and establishment activities (33 CFR 332(h)(2))
- viii. A description of any public and private stakeholder involvement in plan development and implementation, including, where appropriate, coordination with federal, state, tribal and local aquatic resource management and regulatory authorities.

- A number of partners and stakeholders, including agencies, nonprofits, regional groups, and representatives, have played key roles in the Watershed Management Plan process and development. The Plan is viewed as a living document to catalyze increased partnerships, funding, and solutions for local and regional watershed management projects in the Upper Watershed of the San Gabriel River. Management priorities include continued funding, education, and improvements of the draft Plan through iterative processes, practical implementation, and collaborative discussions. Key continuing core partners for the draft Plan have included: Los Angeles County Department of Public Works (LAC DPW); Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB); Rivers & Mountains Conservancy (RMC); California State Polytechnic University, Pomona (Cal Poly); Southern California Edison (SCE); and Angeles National Forest (ANF).
- ix. A description of the long-term protection and management strategies for activities conducted by the in-lieu fee program sponsor.
- To ensure permanent protection of these compensatory mitigation sites, the SGMRC or a qualified organization designated by the SGMRC and approved by the Corps shall obtain and record at the Los Angeles County Registry of Deeds in-perpetuity conservation easements or deed restrictions on each compensatory mitigation site prior to compensatory mitigation site construction. The conservation easements and deed restrictions shall not be recorded until approved in writing by the Corps. The SGMRC shall immediately forward to the Corps copies of the recorded conservation easements or deed restrictions.
 - In addition, long-term management of mitigation sites will be funded by an endowment established at the time of the recordation of the conservation easement or deed restriction and funded by sales of credits to permittees (33 CFR 332.7(d)(2) and 332.8(u)(3)).
- x. A strategy for periodic evaluation and reporting on the progress of the program in achieving the goals and objectives in paragraph (c)(v) of this section, including a process for revising the planning framework as necessary.
- Long-term maintenance and operation of projects within the SGMRC ILF program is handled on a project-by-project basis. Long term maintenance depends on project monitoring. Monitoring has increasingly emerged as a major benefit in restorations and other projects, and as a long-term cost investment for contingency and sustainability planning in order to assess positive and negative changes within project implementation. In general, monitoring and reporting have focused upon disturbances, re-planting, re-treatment, and/or new infestations of invasives. Current monitoring/reporting typically includes site visits two to three times per year with documentation and follow-up recommendations for action. In addition, the monitoring period has now been revised to as many as eight to 10 years, plus potential recommended re-trainings of managers if maintenance/management strategies are not effective. Such increases in the frequency and duration of monitoring, and maintenance as necessary, will undoubtedly aid in the sustainability and success of restoration projects.
 - As to details of monitoring processes, typically teams of as many as three from different scientific backgrounds/training, walk project sites and evaluate status, progress of land, habitat, or restorations. Site-visit photos are taken for documentation, and written reports provide assessment and results with recommendations. Site performance will be measured through traditional vegetative sampling methods as well as an appropriate functional or conditional assessment method (e.g., California Rapid Assessment Method (CRAM)). Some monitoring

documentation provides the basis for yearly reports to agencies, if requested. Such monitoring methods are vital in preventing erosion, halting habitat declines, and/ or giving documentation for restoration funding (or continuation of such funding) in a timely manner. With monitoring, exact locations of populations of sensitive or endangered species can now be tracked with precision and compared with other similar species populations.

- Endangered species require by law unique and special care, maintenance, and management. Biodiversity requires that a comprehensive and exhaustive listing and location for each species be mapped (GIS/GPS). Ecotone management requires monitoring and management of the boundaries between/among different plant communities, as recommended by monitoring/management teams. Bio-indicators of environmental health could be any living species which shows disease, damage, invasiveness in a habitat area. Each habitat will have its unique set of bio-indicators to visibly point out habitat balance and health.
- The fire management component, which has been underway over the last two years, focuses initially on data collection and monitoring. The monitoring plan is multifaceted and conducted by an integrated design and management team of biologists, watershed managers and LA County forest and fuel reduction specialists as well as county fire crews and units. Data collection includes biological surveys, archeological surveys, pre-fire/post-fire comparisons, and documentation using extensive photo sets in varied habitat conditions. Integrated methods used to address fire management will be monitored by both interns and university experts over a 10-year period, with feedback compared to areas not using integrated fire management programs. A similar 500-acre project in another city (Rancho Cucamonga) will be used as a comparative case study. The plan will be successful if bio-indicators show increased habitat health, increased water quality and quantity, including groundwater recharge, reduction in fire management costs, fewer fire hazards, and reduced air quality impairment.
- Maintenance plans focus on the removal and control of invasive plants, overall land management, trail maintenance and restoration of habitat in streamside or riparian areas. Each plan is specific to the factors creating the threat or decline. These factors include the consultants, volunteers, materials, and equipment, all of which are incorporated into the schedules and calendars. Most implementation will start with a plan developed by partnering entities and key resource people or consultants working directly with the SGMRC Team.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE IN-LIEU FEE PROGRAM ACCOUNT

The SGMRC deposits funds received under the ILF program into a restricted account, exclusive to the ILF program, at a Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) bank. The funds are exclusively for project-related activities, including habitat enhancement, resource protection, restoration projects, and land acquisition. Consistent with the existing Agreement (MOA), the monies held in the escrow account shall earn interest. The Conservancy shall authorize the bank to invest the funds in direct obligations of the Government of the United States of America or in obligations of agencies or insurers that are guaranteed by the Government of the United States of America. The account shall be invested in such a manner as to ensure immediate liquidity. Any instrument must be subject to redemption on or prior to the dates the funds will be needed by the Conservancy. All interest and earnings accruing to the account shall remain in the account and shall be used for the specified purposes specified. All interest and earnings are under the authority of the Corps and can only be spent with their approval. Long-term management of mitigation sites will be funded by an endowment established at the time of the recordation of the conservation easement or deed restriction and funded by sales of credits to permittees (33 CFR 332.7(d)(2) and 332.8(u)(3)).