



## Upper Los Angeles River & Tributaries Community Engagement and Outreach Plan

*DRAFT – January 23, 2019*

### I. Introduction

Established by Assembly Bill 466 (AB 466), within the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC), the Upper Los Angeles River and Tributaries (ULART) Working Group is charged with developing a Revitalization Plan for the Upper Los Angeles River, the tributaries of the Pacoima Wash, Tujunga Wash, Verdugo Wash, Arroyo Seco, and any additional tributary waterway that the Working Group determines to be necessary. The Plan will address the unique and diverse needs of the region's watershed and the communities through which it passes.

Pursuant to AB 466, and foundational to the Working Group's charge and development of the Plan, is to undergo traditional and non-traditional community engagement and outreach to local residents, stakeholders, neighborhoods and community groups with a prioritization of disadvantaged communities. This requires a master planning process that is based upon community engagement and builds upon the many existing plans for the Los Angeles River, but does not duplicate past efforts. In particular, this planning process will build on the successful outreach conducted for the Los Angeles River Master Plan. Supporting the Working Group's efforts are the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC), as well as a consulting team that includes Tetra Tech, StudioMLA, and MIG, Inc., collectively referred to as the "Project Planning Team."

To further support efforts to reach all communities in the watershed, MRCA has requested State-registered, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and nonprofit organizations to assist the Project Planning Team. The selected NGOs will use creative strategies and approaches to engage non-traditional stakeholders. The NGOs will provide informational outreach sessions that truly engage various communities, demographics and age groups through active listening and dialogue, engagement and education. This will serve as input for the Revitalization Plan and will require extensive coordination with the Project Planning Team.

This Community Engagement and Outreach Plan (CEOP) serves as the guiding document to ensure local disadvantaged communities and stakeholders are meaningfully engaged throughout the process to develop the Revitalization Plan. The CEOP outlines the objectives, methods, tools, key audiences and success metrics that the Project Planning Team and NGOs will undertake to engage a diverse cross-section of the project area and meaningfully engage disadvantaged communities to participate in the development of the Revitalization Plan. This includes activities that will leverage the NGOs' strong networks and experience with disadvantaged communities. Additionally, the CEOP describes the roles and responsibilities of the Project Planning Team and NGOs to ensure a productive and collaborative process.

## II. Outreach Objectives

The CEOP will offer opportunities for a wide range of stakeholders and communities to provide input during the development of the Revitalization Plan. In particular, outreach will target the involvement of disadvantaged communities, as defined by California’s Health and Safety Code, section 39711:

*“Disadvantaged communities shall be identified based on geographic, socioeconomic, public health, and environmental hazard criteria, and may include, but are not limited to, either of the following:*

- 1) *Areas disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative public health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation.*
- 2) *Areas with concentrations of people that are of low income, high unemployment, low levels of homeownership, high rent burden, sensitive populations, or low levels of educational attainment.”*

The objectives of the CEOP include the following:

- **Reach diverse communities in the planning area that have traditionally not been engaged in environmental planning processes.** Engagement activities will be designed to ensure broad and meaningful participation from disadvantaged communities throughout the planning area. The team will proactively reach out to and engage a broad spectrum of communities, stakeholder groups, low-income residents, non-English speaking and limited English proficiency (LEP) populations.
- **Create authentic community dialogue by leveraging local networks.** Authentic community dialogue will provide valuable input to inform the Revitalization Plan. Authenticity will come from tapping into the existing networks of the NGOs and local community leaders and organizations to collect input from a wide range of community members. These leaders, organizations and networks will have strong and credible relationships with disadvantaged communities. Equity across the planning area will also be a focus of the outreach efforts.
- **Deliver an inclusive, flexible, and tailored approach to engagement.** The outreach process will facilitate engagement in a variety of settings that are relevant to local and cultural preferences to the greatest extent possible. This flexible approach is designed to be adaptable to the practices and strengths of the NGOs, which will lead the majority of the outreach activities.
- **Provide opportunities for “high touch” engagement.** A key component of the outreach process will be personal, face-to-face interactions, or “high touch” approaches. Outreach methods such as workshops and informal activities with tailored outreach tools will enable community members to engage in meaningful, easy-to-understand, and interesting ways that build community commitment to the Revitalization Plan over time.
- **Encourage community members to become long-term stewards of the environment and the ULART outcomes.** The outreach and involvement efforts will aim to create new stewards of the environment by encouraging community members to stay engaged in the long-term. The idea is to build residents’ investment in the Revitalization Plan by demonstrating the positive impacts of long-term environmental stewardship.

### III. Roles and Responsibilities

The Project Planning Team and selected NGOs will collaborate and coordinate to provide outreach and engagement throughout the planning process. Overall, the Project Planning Team will lead the outreach planning and coordination efforts, and the NGOs will conduct the majority of community engagement activities with disadvantaged community groups throughout the duration of the planning process. Importantly, NGOs will use creative strategies and approaches to engage non-traditional stakeholders, and will be cognizant of language, multicultural/multi-ethnic, and multi-generational outreach needs.

To ensure a productive and positive collaboration between all the members of the Outreach Team, specific roles and responsibilities as well as a collaboration protocol have been defined below.

#### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Project Planning Team**

1. Create and provide meeting materials, handouts, and any other necessary documents.
2. Assist with outreach coordination and follow up with all organizations involved.
3. Coordinate meetings with the Project Planning Team.
4. Coordinate with NGO partners.
5. Identify and develop technical information needed for project.
6. Develop and maintain the Community Engagement and Outreach Plan.
7. Provide language translation for meetings, as necessary.
8. Secure food and refreshments for meetings, as necessary.
9. Develop the complete Revitalization Plan and Appendices
10. Incorporate community input in the final Revitalization Plan Document
11. Serve as point of contact with the Working Group.
12. Share community input with the Working Group and Committees as appropriate.
13. Serve as point of contact and designated official public response to all media inquiries.

#### **Roles and Responsibilities of NGOs:**

1. Provide feedback toward a Community Engagement and Outreach Plan.
2. Solicit members of the public for participation in community outreach.
3. Distribute and conduct outreach services of public information.
4. Utilize watershed education activities during community engagement.
5. Provide review of draft documents for subject matter expertise.
6. Provide facilitation and support of outreach meetings including documentation of input.
7. Coordinate meetings with the Project Planning Team.
8. Deliver all required materials to the Project Planning Team on or before deadlines for inclusion of community input into the Revitalization Plan

### IV. Communications and Collaboration Protocol

Each NGO will designate a project manager to serve as a key point of contact for the duration of the program. The project managers will manage the schedule to deliver the engagement and outreach activities described in the CEOP. To keep track of progress and identify areas for additional guidance or training, project managers will be responsible for providing frequent updates to the Project Planning Team using the reporting methods described below.

- **Coordination Calls:** The NGO project managers and the Project Planning Team will conduct coordination calls throughout the duration of the program to review progress and identify next steps. Additional calls will be conducted as needed leading up to major events or project milestones.
- **Workplan and Timeline:** Each NGO will develop a workplan and timeline based on its role and responsibilities related to implementation of the CEOP. The workplan will identify engagement activity dates, estimate geographic reach, and audiences. It will also provide a refined description of the outreach activity and identify necessary technical assistance needs.
- **Milestones Progress Reports:** NGOs will submit progress reports at key milestones during the planning process. Progress reports will briefly list work completed to date and identify anticipated next steps.
- **Tracking Forms:** NGOs will provide concise summaries of engagement activities using a tracking form provided by the Project Planning Team. The tracking form will identify key metrics such as number of community members reached and demographic data.
- **Community Input Summary:** At the end of each phase of the engagement process, NGOs will prepare documentation of the results of the engagement efforts. The results will include a description of the activity, a snapshot of the outreach, a description of the target community, data findings, any visual documentation, and lessons learned. It will conclude with a set of recommendations for the Revitalization Plan and suggestions for continued engagement in the target community(-ies).
- **Program Evaluation:** At the end of the process, NGOs will evaluate the overall process, identify best practices and offer recommendations.

## V. Phases, Methods and Tools

The CEOP encompasses a range of methods and tools to reach diverse audiences and collect valuable input for the Revitalization Plan. Overall, it's important to make it easy and convenient for people to participate, while giving them the tools to stay engaged in the long-term. The engagement process will be conducted in three phases, in alignment with the three technical phases of the planning process:

- I. **Inventory and Analysis:** Identify opportunities and challenges faced by local communities within the plan area. Gain a better understand of access to and use of the Upper LA River and adjacent open space or recreation facilities.
- II. **Concept Development:** Invite community members to respond to and share creative and innovative ideas for improvements within the Plan area.
- III. **Plan Preparation:** Collect feedback the Draft Revitalization Plan, including visions and goals, alternatives and recommendations.

Community engagement will play a central role during all three phases of the planning process. The outreach tools and engagement methods described below may vary from one phase to the other as they will be further refined once detailed outreach objectives have been determined for each of the three phases. Also, each NGO's strengths, assets, community networks and knowledge of disadvantaged communities will be considered in tailoring the methods and tools.

### **Outreach Tools**

The NGOs will be responsible for leading the outreach efforts to raise public awareness and interest and collect input from local and disadvantaged communities and throughout the ULART planning area. They will promote the activities and foster interest in the planning process by leveraging their local networks and tabling at popular community events. NGOs will ensure they connect with communities throughout the geography, focusing on traditionally underrepresented communities and inspiring them to participate in the planning process.

- **Outreach Toolkit:** To assist NGOs in their outreach efforts, the Project Planning Team will prepare an outreach toolkit which will be flexible enough to support a broad set of engagement activities. The toolkit will include the following materials in both English and Spanish:
  - Toolkit cover sheet: to describe the outreach materials and how they are used.
  - Meeting/workshop flyer: to help promote the engagement activities.
  - Factsheet: to raise awareness about the Revitalization Plan.
  - Input tools (comment card or posters): to collect initial community feedback.
  - Project maps (11x17 watershed maps): to help orient residents to the project planning area and to collect initial place-based feedback.
  - Uniform messaging and identity: to create a common understanding of the project
  - Tracking sheet: to collect demographic information on participants to ensure the team is meeting its outreach goals.
  - Sign-in sheet: to collect contact information for workshop participants.

In addition to the toolkit materials the NGOs will be provided with press release focusing on the launch of the public engagement process and a set of speaking points that can be used during the outreach activities.

- **Online Outreach:** In addition to traditional outreach, NGOs will be responsible for electronically publicizing materials and solicit participation from their respective network and online database. Online outreach includes: newsletters, email blasts, posting on social media platforms, posting on organization website.
- **Pop-Ups and Field Work:** On the field outreach will entail attending existing events and meetings, including some evenings and weekends, to interest a broader audience and engage diverse community members. Pop-ups and tabling at existing events allows the team to reach people where they are. The format allows for brief interaction and a quick input opportunity. The pop-ups should have a fun, causal feel to encourage people to attend other engagement activities such as the community meetings.
- **Interactive Website:** The Project Planning team will develop and maintain an *Interactive Website* for the Plan that allows users to learn about the project, see project updates and upcoming events, participate in surveys, and review Draft and Final Plan components. All content and design elements for the website must be reviewed and approved by the Project

Planning Team before going live. The web platform must have a responsive design to work across multiple platform types. The website should be updated by the consultant team throughout the planning process. A private portal for the Working Group members shall also be created to share project relevant materials.

### ***Engagement Methods and Activities***

With the support of the NGOs, the Project Planning Team will organize and facilitate several engagement activities to collect feedback and ideas from community members on the Revitalization Plan.

- **Community Meetings:** Three sets of meetings and workshops will be conducted during the planning process, in alignment with the three phases of the process. Phases 2 and 3 will begin immediately after the community meetings from previous phases. Reports from each form of engagement and community meetings will be due 1 week after the date of the community meeting (pending final contractual language). MIG will facilitate the community meetings and the Project Planning Team will assist with preparing meeting materials and the outreach toolkit, as described above. The community meetings will be organized as follows:
  - Phase 1 (January through March): Four (4) Community Information Meetings will be conducted in March to raise awareness about the planning process, provide an overview of the Revitalization Plan objectives, and collect preliminary feedback from community members. The meetings will be hosted by the NGOs and held in four different locations equitably distributed throughout the planning area.
  - Phase 2 (April through May): Two (2) Community Meetings will be held in May focusing on proposed projects and conceptual plans. The meetings will aim to confirm the community feedback collected in the first phase. NGOs will suggest two different locations to host the meetings.
  - Phase 3 (June through July): Two (2) Community Meetings will be held in June or July to present the draft plan. NGOs will suggest two different locations to host the meetings. Schedule is subject to change pursuant to Project Planning Team,

Engagement methods to be used during the community meetings may include, but are not limited to:

- **Live polling:** Live polling helps make a community meeting more interactive and keeps participants engaged. Polling can be used to determine community preferences, choose priorities, and collect demographic information to confirm who was engaged through the outreach activity.
- **Small group discussions:** Small group discussions allow more voices to be heard and provides an opportunity for participants to learn from each other. Participants then share the results with the larger group.
- **Interactive mapping:** This outreach tool is ideal to collect location-specific feedback. Participants are encouraged to engage directly with a map to share their ideas, comments and suggestions.

- **Facilitator Training:** One or two training sessions will be organized to introduce the engagement methods and meeting facilitation tips to the Outreach Team. The training sessions will be designed to help the NGOs become local ambassadors of the Revitalization Plan and solicit valuable feedback from community members. Through these sessions the NGOs may also provide input for refining the outreach toolkit and engagement methods.
- **Survey Instrument:** A highly visual and interactive survey will be created to collect input from community members on their vision and ideas for their communities and the Revitalization Plan. The survey instrument will be available in digital format through a map-based survey tool, as well as in paper format to distribute during community events and workshops. The survey will be designed to encourage community members to think big about the possibilities offered by revitalizing the ULART in their community. The survey will also ask community members to identify any challenges they experience today, such as access barriers or security concerns.

## VI. Target Audiences

The project will engage community leaders, the general public and a range of communities of interest across the planning area to collect their input on the Revitalization Plan. Each member of the Outreach Team will be tasked with targeting specific audiences based on their respective community networks and constituencies. The following audiences will be targeted through the outreach efforts:

1. Local residents
2. Community organizations
3. Environmental groups and advocates
4. Faith-based organizations
5. Educational institutions and young people
6. Social service agencies
7. Local business organizations
8. Older adults
9. Youth
10. People with disabilities

## VII. Metrics of Success

The success of the CEOP will be assessed according to its ability to reach the target audiences and conduct meaningful engagement. Specific metrics include the following:

### Accessibility

- Engagement activities will be held in a variety of locations and formats to accommodate hard-to-reach groups such as youth, seniors, minorities, low-income families, and people with disabilities.

- Bi-lingual staff and toolkit materials will be assigned to locations and activities that are likely to engage Spanish speaking residents.
- All formal meetings will be held in ADA accessible locations with access to public transit.
- Engagement activities will be available at varying times to accommodate the needs of area workers in the 24-hour economy.

**Extent, or reach, of the process**

- Targeted communications and activities will reach disadvantaged communities and those who traditionally do not participate in environmental planning processes.
- Participation activities will be publicized broadly using an array of communication methods, particularly through established channels and networks that have a proven reach to target audiences.
- Each NGO will aim to create at least 200 touch points with community members subject to geographic outreach area.
- Participants will be aware of multiple options for engaging in the process.
- Outreach activities will routinely collect participant data to track the reach of the process.

**Diversity of participants**

- Participants in the planning process will be reflective of the demographics of the planning area, with a strong emphasis on disadvantaged communities.
- Participants will also represent the cross-section of diverse interests in the planning area.