

August 7, 2006

Carol Armstrong
City of Los Angeles, Dept of Public Works
Bureau of Engineering
1149 S. Broadway, Suite 600
Los Angeles, CA 90015

RE: SEPULVEDA BASIN SPORTS COMPLEX BE 490-06

Transmitted by EMAIL 2:45pm 8/7/06

Dear Ms. Armstrong,

California Native Plant Society (CNPS) is a non-profit statewide organization with nearly 9000 members. The Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mountains Chapter has about 500 members and is one of three CNPS Chapters in Los Angeles County. CNPS is dedicated to the preservation of California's native flora through science, education and advocacy. In particular, CNPS strongly advocates for utilizing only native plants in landscape projects in the Sepulveda Basin, the goal of which is to over time create a "virtual" wildlife reserve throughout the Basin. The City of Los Angeles' street planting and Recreation and Parks divisions have already adopted this policy and the result can be seen with the native trees and shrubs planted along Woodley Avenue, Burbank Blvd., and in the many recent park landscaping projects. The 7-acre berm around the Tillman Water Reclamation Plant is planted with native plants and is a showpiece for large native landscaping projects. Partly due to the success of this project, the MTA agreed to planting 500,000 native plants along the Orange Line, with only native plants being planted within the Sepulveda Basin.

While CNPS is pleased that California native plants are being considered for the proposed Sports Complex, we are disappointed that the design does not protect or utilize the site's most important resource, the Los Angeles River. Nor does it serve as a linkage in promoting restoration of the Los Angeles River. It misses several opportunities - both environmental and economic - by not considering a restored Los Angeles River as part of the project design.

As stated in the project description, one of the three main purposes of the project is: "to serve as a vital linkage in promoting restoration of the Los Angeles River corridor through riparian habitat provision, runoff filtration, enhanced public access to the River and protection of it's ecology." Evaluation factors to be considered include the protection and utilization of important resources, conservation, wetlands, fish and wildlife values, and floodplain values.

By removing the concrete Los Angeles River bank and reinforcing the unarmored banks using native vegetation - i.e. 'bioengineered bank stabilization' - the project would restore native wildlife habitat, increase biodiversity, improve water quality, decrease scour velocity, and make major improvements to the aesthetic values of a significant reach of the LA River within a major regional park. It would provide the public with their first opportunity to experience the river as it once was, and as it can be again. This has been a difficult concept to communicate to the general public and it would be a shame to miss our best opportunity to build a constituency for the Los Angeles River Revitalization efforts.

For two decades our chapter of the CNPS has been involved in the development and management of the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve that has resulted in a world-class urban wildlife refuge. Please keep the momentum going by incorporating the Los Angeles River into the Sports Complex planning process.

Sincerely,

Steve Hartman
California Native Plant Society
Los Angeles - Santa Monica Mountains Chapter
6117 Reseda Blvd. Suite H