

WLASNC Board FY 2017-2018

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To: Jamie Keeton, Chair
Fr: J. Ross
Re: **Resolution: Los Angeles River (revised)**
Date: Mar. 3, 2019

Resolution: LUPC voted, 10-0-0, to request that the City of Los Angeles coordinate flood protection and mitigation of existing flooding risks in the Los Angeles River area with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and County of Los Angeles. The City and County also should publicize the 1991 Los Angeles County Drainage Area Review Feasibility Study (LACDA)ⁱ for neighborhoods beyond the 2016 11-mile ARBOR Study section of the Los Angeles River near Atwater Village, and other sections of the river that may flood neighboring communities.

Revision: All agencies (city, county, state, federal) should study all options to reduce the impact and taxpayer cost of a 100-year flood. This includes County gaining control of the channel from the U.S. Army Corps, removing sediment build-up, reducing hardscape (parking lots, building footprints) and expanding open space, increasing the size of spreading grounds and adding drywells to infiltrate stormwater into aquifers, adding swales to small medians and yards, strengthening dams and levees, and evaluating land use and zoning designations within the proximity of the river, which may result in downzoning.

Note that spreading grounds and ponds/lakes behind dams can double as recreational areas.

Facts and background:

1. The 2016 USACE Hydrology Report, Floodplain Analysis- Los Angeles River: Barham Boulevard to First Street Flood Plain Management Services Special Studyⁱⁱ sponsored by the city is a comprehensive study that shows that much of the Atwater Village in a high-risk flood zone (risk increased from regular/"safe" Zone X to special Zones A and AE). Proposed FEMA Flood maps show this information, but have not been finalized for release to the public, insurance companies and mortgage companies. As many as 3,000 parcels (homes and businesses) may be at risk (874 houses are currently at risk), as a result of the proposed flood zone remapping. ⁱⁱⁱ
2. Current FEMA FIRM Flood Maps may be inaccurate, because they do not account for this more current/ accurate information in the USACE Report. Flood insurance and mortgages are based on these maps, and insurance and rates likely will increase if flood risk increases. Building foundations may need to be raised, which is expensive and complex construction.
3. RiverLA (DBA of Los Angeles River Revitalization Corporation) was a public non-profit that was created by the City of Los Angeles and initially funded by the CRA, but many of the boardmembers were developers, instead of the area residents. Increased building size and reduced open space were planned.
4. The City has no flood control authority, but has land use/ zoning authority. The County and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have flood control authority.
5. Mitigations include early warning systems, channel cleaning, channel size/capacity increase.
6. The L.A. River flood channel lost 50% of capacity from sediment runoff, related to increased paving and development.

7. Current flood protection is 20-year storm with Hesco Barriers, which can increase to 51-year storm if cleaned out. FEMA requires protection from 100-year storm.

Findings and justifications:

1. The Planning Dept. and Bureau of Engineering may have reserved an insufficient amount of land for stormwater spreading grounds for large floods. By construction large buildings and impervious pavement, insufficient soil volume may be provided for required infiltration.
2. In A and AE zones (problematic “special” flood zones), downzoning and reduced density may be required, and open space may need to be increased.
3. All citizens of Los Angeles may face liability from inaccurate flood maps, improper zoning, and insufficient mitigation of flood risks in all areas of the city.

ⁱ http://eng2.lacity.org/projects/fmp/pdf/LACDA_Review_Study_Main.pdf (page 67)

ⁱⁱ http://eng2.lacity.org/projects/LARIVER_Glendale_Narrows/docs/LAR_FPMS_Hydraulic_Report_FINAL_October2016_CompleteDocument.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-los-angeles-river-flood-zone-20161017-snap-story.html>