



Preface

“Protection of Local Creeks” was identified as a critical community concern in City of Calabasas General Plan, Community Issues, page II-3. The General Plan - Agenda for 21st Century identifies the following goals under “Environmental Responsibility Goals”:

“To secure better management and protection of environmental resources, the City of Calabasas is committed to:

- *Broadening the application of environmentally conscious planning and design, establishing Calabasas as a community which acknowledges limits on natural resources, and lives within those limits;*
- *Recognizing the area’s natural environment as a critical community asset and a key component of Calabasas’ quality of life and establishing a system of environmental management wherein the natural environment will be protected out of a sense of responsibility and commitment to environment quality, placing a higher priority on environmental protection and open space preservation than on expansion of urban or rural development;*
- *Defining the area’s environmental carrying capacity, and limiting the level, rate, and distribution of population and economic growth to that which is consistent with improved environmental quality and the availability of natural resources; and*
- *Minimizing the environmental impacts of its own activities by making environmental sensitivity a key concern in the provision of municipal services and facilities, and incorporating environmentally conscious construction and management practices in the development and maintenance of municipal facilities”.*

Phase I: Comprehensive Study

The City of Calabasas has three main creeks that flow through its borders: Las Virgenes Creek in the Malibu Creek Watershed, and Dry Canyon and McCoy Creeks, in the Los Angeles River Watershed. The Malibu Creek Watershed is located within an area of prime concern for environmental planning functions such as the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and Malibu Creek State Park. Two corridors for habitat movement have been identified within the watershed, and for this reason the watershed provides a key function for habitat linkage to the surrounding natural areas of



the Santa Monica Mountains, Simi Hills, Santa Susanna Mountains, and beyond. Las Virgenes Creek watershed is highly undeveloped, although the stream has been altered considerably below the Ventura-Los Angeles county line. Below the county line to Agoura Road, the creek has been straightened, rip rapped, relocated, and given other treatments typical of an urbanizing area. This has caused accelerated erosion below the concrete reach, and likely increased sedimentation. Several studies of the Malibu Creek Watershed had already provided some baseline information for its tributary, Las Virgenes Creek. However, Dry Canyon and McCoy Creeks had gone largely unstudied.

These creeks have the potential to provide significant recreational and wildlife habitat, if there is guidance to prioritize and direct efforts that can be made in the community. Dry Canyon and McCoy Creeks both have similar effects from urbanization as Las Virgenes Creek, although the extent had not been quantified sufficiently for the purposes of a detailed, comprehensive study. Large segments of these two creeks flow through gated communities and private properties. Also, the flood control systems take the creek underground for some stretches.

These developments have largely ignored the creek as a resource, and many areas are inaccessible to the public. This inaccessibility is due to several factors, including fencing of concrete lined areas, steep slopes and ravines due to erosion, lack of resource information, and virtually no trails around the riparian area to accommodate use. Finding good access points to the creeks with the least amount of disturbance for outdoor education and increased appreciation for the creek resource purposes was a major goal of any creek master plan.

The City initially tried to develop a restoration master plan in 1998; however, funding was insufficient to produce the quality of design product desired. In 1999, City of Calabasas Public Works Department, Environmental Services Division submitted and received a 205(j) grant from the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) to prepare a study for Las Virgenes, McCoy, and Dry Canyon Creeks, within the City boundaries. The grant was a federally funded program focused on water quality planning for local public agencies.

The objective of this study was to perform a thorough and in-depth baseline study and management plan of these creeks from which to prioritize and facilitate restoration decisions. This comprehensive study would define and establish goals of a restoration and implementation plan, to provide data to evaluate the current conditions of the beneficial uses, and their impairment, and make recommendations for management and restoration of these three creeks. The study's four primary goals were a) water quality improvements, b) creek restoration, c) recreational opportunities, and d) education facilities. All three creeks had been added to the 303(d) list.¹

¹ Under the federal Clean Water Act, water quality standards consist of beneficial use designations of water bodies and numeric or narrative water quality objectives, which are protective of those beneficial uses as well as the state's anti-degradation policy. Section 303(d)(A)(1) of the Clean Water Act requires the State of California to identify those waters, which are impaired by pollution (i.e. not meeting water quality standards), and establish TMDLs for the pollutants causing the impairments. A TMDL specifies the maximum amount of a pollutant that a water body can receive and still meet water quality standards, and



Public Involvement

During the course of this work, several public meetings were held to invite participation and input from the general public and watershed stakeholders, including presentations given at the Environmental Commission, the Planning Commission, Open Space Task Force and the Malibu Creek Watershed Advisory Council. Following are milestones of public involvement:

- December 6, 2000: City Council approved and authorized execution of a contract with the State Water Resource Control Board for 205(j) water quality planning grant to conduct comprehensive study of Las Virgenes, dry canyon, and McCoy creeks (Resolution No. 2000-665)
- June 5, 2001: During the public meeting, members of the Environmental Commission made changes to the scope of work prior to submitting the document to the Planning Commission. The scope of work included collecting data, computer modeling of pollutants and habitat, identifying opportunities and constraints, receiving and reviewing public comment, and completing the Master Plan. The activities were anticipated to emphasize structural on-the-ground projects rather than focusing on behavioral modification.
- June 28, 2001: The Planning Commission recommended approval of the Scope of Work to the City Council. One comment from the Planning Commission directed staff to maximize the use of Los Angeles County's Las Virgenes Creek restoration project to make more efficient use of fundings allocated for the Calabasas Creeks Master Plan. Los Angeles County Department of Public Works has received proposals from qualified firms to receive design alternatives for restoring Las Virgenes Creek from the Los Angeles/Ventura County line to Lost Hills Road.
- July 18, 2001: City Council authorized staff to advertise the Request for Proposals for the 205(j) grant for the Creeks Master Plan.
- November 7, 2002: Stakeholder's public hearing was held at 6 PM in the Council Chamber at the City Hall. The notice of public hearing was published in local newspapers.
- December 5, 2001: City Council awarded the contract to EDAW. The goal of this study was to evaluate, define and prioritize activities that will likely result in the restoration of the beneficial uses of Dry Canyon, McCoy and Las Virgenes Creeks.
- July 2002: With close staff supervision, the EDAW began the process of developing the Creeks Master Plan.
- April 24, 2003: The development of the Draft Creeks Restoration Plan was laid out and presented to the Planning Commission at the public meeting. In order to relay comments for incorporation into the draft Creeks Master Plan document, staff

allocates the acceptable pollutant load to point and non-point sources. The TMDL may be expressed in terms of mass per time, toxicity units, concentration, or with other appropriate measures.



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requested that the Planning Commission members complete and submit responses to a questionnaire to the Environmental Services Division.

- May 5, 2003: A questionnaire inviting comments and suggestions was distributed to all City employees.
- May 6, 2003: Information on the Draft Creeks Master Plan was presented to the Environmental Commission at the public meeting. A questionnaire was distributed inviting suggestions on restoration priorities from the Commission.
- July 3, 2003: The draft Creeks Master Plan was completed.
- July 7, 2003: Copies of the "Draft Creeks Master Plan for Restoration" were distributed to stakeholders such as the SWRCB, Mountains Restoration Trust (MRT), and the Malibu Creek Watershed Advisory Council with a request for review and comment.
- July 18, 2003: The Environmental Commission acknowledged the receipt of the Draft Plan. Staff made a formal presentation and requested comments from commissioners and the public.
- July 22, 2003: Draft Creeks Restoration Plan was made available to the general public via the City's website
- August 20, 2003: Staff responded to questions from the Open Space Advisory Task Force. *Q) Did the Board receive a copy of the plan and if so, have they responded to it? If not, why not? R) Both the Regional Water Quality Control Board and the State Water Resources Control Board have received a copy of the plan and have provided comments via telephone conversations. Q) Did the Board review the plan's recommendations relative to all state requirements pertaining to water quality? R) The Creeks Restoration Plan was never intended to address all state requirements. The city's NPDES Permit Program is currently in place to meet state requirements. By implementing all of the NPDES Permit requirements, the city may not be in compliance with the upcoming TMDLs. In response, the city and the Malibu Creek Watershed co-permittees are also currently developing Plan Blue, a regional plan to reduce and eliminate urban runoff.*
- August 2003: City staff reviewed and incorporated into the Creeks Restoration Plan the comments received from the following groups and agencies: Calabasas' Open Space Advisory Task Force, Environmental Commission, SWRCB, Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board, California Native Plants Society, MRT, and the National Parks Services for the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. The Creeks Master Plan had to be finalized no later than August 30, 2003, in order to complete all project final reports and invoicing.
- September 3, 2003: Upon completion of the peer and public commenting period, staff revised the Phase I study accordingly. Copies of the final version were made available to the City Council. It was also posted on City's website. The final version of CD and Master Plan were circulated to the Environmental Commission and Planning Commission. A version of the CD presentation was aired on CTV during two weeks.



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- September 4, 2003: Open Space Task Force recommended the City Council approval of the Las Virgenes, McCoy, and Dry Canyon Creeks Master Plan for Restoration.
- September 4, 2003: During the public meeting, the Environmental Commission recommended to the City Council approval of the Las Virgenes, McCoy, and Dry Canyon Creeks Master Plan for Restoration.
- September 11, 2003: The Planning Commission recommended the Las Virgenes, McCoy, and Dry Canyon Creeks Master Plan for Restoration for City Council approval.
- September 17, 2003: City Council approved the completed Plan. The Creeks Restoration Plan did not require formal adoption, as it was a comprehensive study and not an implementation document. The document title was expanded to include the "Phase I: Comprehensive Study" subtitle so as to clarify this intent.

As a planning document for acceptance as one of the master plans of the City, *Las Virgenes, McCoy, and Dry Canyon Creeks Master Plan for Restoration, Phase I: Comprehensive Study* went through an extensive peer review by the Environmental Commission, Planning Commission, City Departments, external government agencies and non-profit organizations. In addition, several publicly noticed workshops were held to introduce the plan to the public and address their concern.

Implementation Plan

The Phase I document served as a basis for staff to proceed with preparation of the Las Virgenes, McCoy, and Dry Canyon Creeks Master Plan for Restoration: Phase II: Implementation document. The final draft has been referenced in many grant applications solely as a study.

On September 7, 2005, the City Council authorized the Public Works Director to contract for completion of the next step toward implementing the identified projects in the Phase I Study, and provide an investigation as to the cost and feasibility of implementing the listed projects. The Phase II Feasibility Study would provide budget level cost figures for conducting necessary feasibility studies, engineering design, and construction of the identified projects from the Phase I: Comprehensive Study.

The work was contracted to Willdan to prepare the Phase II Feasibility Study. In order to meet the accelerated project schedule, Willdan subcontracted the environmental habitat improvement projects listed in the Phase I Study between Questa Engineering and Foothill Associates for analysis.

Each project site was field reviewed to ascertain information required to describe the project and provide a budget-level cost estimate for project design and construction. Projects that were in the same vicinity, similar nature, or would otherwise logically benefit from being implemented together were grouped into a single combined construction project. Tables 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B and 1C present the detailed study results, including an indication of the level of priority as relates to water quality, habitat, and overall public safety benefit; a brief description of each proposed habitat improvement



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project; budget level cost estimates for conducting project-specific technical studies, completing any required engineering design, project construction and inspection, and projected operations and maintenance costs (O & M), assuming required maintenance periods consistent with the type of construction contemplated by each project. All cost calculations were based on year 2005 prices and are subject to inflation over time. Appropriate inflation factors should be applied to future funding applications that adjust for time passed. The final Phase II: Feasibility Study was submitted to the City Council on November 22, 2005 for review and filing.

The potential projects identified in the Creeks Master Plan will be used in the Los Angeles County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) that is currently under preparation, with the active participation of all local jurisdictions within the Los Angeles County, water supply agencies, non-profit organization and various stakeholder groups. Staff believes that future grant applications will greatly benefit in the grant point scale if they were to provide reference to a document as the City's official position.

As the City pursues funding for projects identified in the Creek Master Plan, it was advantageous for the Plan be accepted and recognized by the City as the governing master document for issues involving the creek system and authority on improving the health of our City's environmental asset.

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