

December 13, 2013: Informational Hearing: The Los Angeles River and its San Fernando Valley Watershed: Progress & Opportunity - Chair of the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee, Senator Fran Pavley

Global Significance

As the leading science-based, international conservation organization, The Nature Conservancy can say with authority that the restoration of the Los Angeles River is of particularly high value, because it is a riparian habitat within one of the last remaining mediterranean-climate regions on Earth.

Mediterranean-climate regions

*Mediterranean-climate regions have high levels of species richness and endemism and are found in only five places on Earth (the Mediterranean Basin, the western cape of South Africa, southwestern Australia, the central coast of Chile, and California and northern Baja California). While mediterranean-climate regions cover only 2.2 percent of Earth's land surface, they contain 20 percent of all known plant species.

Unfortunately, mediterranean ecosystems are also among the most threatened on Earth. More than 41 percent of the mediterranean biome has been converted to farmland and urban uses, and only 5 percent of its natural area has been protected.

“When Nature Thrives, People Thrive”

*Restoring the Los Angeles River is a necessary component of the restoration of nature and of nature's benefits to people in the nation's second largest metropolitan area.

Restoration

*In the Conservancy's 2013 Assessment of the biological diversity in Greater Los Angeles, we found that important ecological values remain as do opportunities for ecological restoration that will benefit nature and people. The areas of greatest restoration potential are the region's riparian corridors, the foothills, and water retention/flood control basins, including the soft-bottom portion of the Los Angeles River. Restoration of the Los Angeles River is also important, because its flows are vital to the region's hydrological and groundwater health and to the riparian plant communities along its course. These riparian plant communities are essential to the existence of many of the region's distinctive species of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects, spiders and other invertebrates.

Support & Connectivity Gains

*In closing, the Conservancy supports the extensive habitat restoration envisioned in the Army Corps of Engineers' ARBOR Study, including the proposal to restore the 11-mile soft-bottom portion of the Los Angeles River, Valley Foothill Riparian Strand, and Freshwater Marsh Habitat. The restoration of habitat and wildlife linkages will reconnect habitats along the river and throughout the region, which would lead to broader biodiversity gains.