

Civil Works Branch, Asset Management Division  
Public Notice Comment Period: **July 22 through August 20, 2009**

---

**San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority  
SAN GABRIEL RIVER DISCOVERY CENTER PROJECT  
AT WHITTIER NARROWS  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

This Public Notice is issued by the Chief, Asset Management Division and accompanies the project's *Draft Environmental Assessment (dEA)*, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Environmental issues relating to the proposed action are discussed in the *dEA* which has been prepared and is available for public review. The public is invited to review and provide written comments on this documentation for the proposed San Gabriel River Discovery Center at Whittier Narrows.

For additional information please contact: Carvel Bass, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at (213) 452.3392

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION:** The San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority (Authority) is seeking U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) consent to sublease an approximately 10.58 acre site within the Whittier Narrows Natural Area. The 10.58 acre site is adjacent to an approximately 0.63 acre site in the City of South El Monte that is owned by the County of Los Angeles. The Authority proposes to demolish the existing structures and use the combined sites (approximately 11.21 acres) to construct an 18,230 square foot (sf) interpretive center that would be primarily located on the County of Los Angeles-owned parcel, and associated outdoor classrooms, pathways, maintenance building, parking lot and demonstration wetland/riparian area on the larger, 10.58 acre site within the Whittier Narrows Natural Area (Natural Area) that is owned by the United States. The Natural Area occupies approximately 300 acres in the southern portion of the Whittier Narrows Recreation Area (Recreation Area). The Recreation Area is federal land currently under lease (Master Lease) to the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation (LACDPR). The sublease agreement between LACDPR and the Authority, would permit the Authority to construct, operate, and maintain the Discovery Center within the parameters set forth by the Master Lease. The sublease agreement would be negotiated by LACDPR and the Authority subject to the review and approval of USACE. All provisions of the Master Lease will be attached and incorporated by reference into the sublease agreement.

The proposed action would permit an interpretive center to be constructed that would accommodate larger groups of school children than can be served at the existing Whittier Narrows Nature Center. The primary project features include a LEED Certified interpretive center, 150-space parking lot, maintenance building, open air classroom, constructed riparian/wetland area, covered outdoor classroom, and connecting pathways from these locations.

**PROJECT LOCATION:** The proposed action would take place on an approximately 10.58 acre site within the Natural Area that would be used with an adjacent approximately 0.63 acre parcel owned by the County of Los Angeles to form an approximately 11.21 acre site (lease boundary) for the

proposed San Gabriel River Discovery Center. The site is located at 1000 North Durfee Avenue in the Whittier Narrows community of unincorporated Los Angeles County and the City of South El Monte. It is bound by Durfee Avenue to the north, commercial/industrial uses to the west, and open space to the east and south that is part of the Natural Area. LACDPR owns the 0.63-acre parcel within the lease boundary that contains the existing Whittier Narrows Nature Center (WNNC) building. The USACE owns the remaining 10.58 acres of the sublease boundary and leases it to LACDPR for recreation and educational purposes.

**PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED:** Efforts to expand and improve the WNNC facility have been contemplated for many years. The facility serves as an educational resource for the area and hosts numerous educational programs for visiting school children from across Los Angeles. However, the existing WNNC facility is aging and small in size. The existing exhibit space is limited to strictly interpreting the Natural Area and the exhibits are outdated. Further, due to the size of the existing facility, only a limited number of visiting students can be accommodated at any one time. The basic objective for the project proponent (the Authority) is to expand the capacity of the facility to educate the general and school-age population within a 25-mile radius of the site about the San Gabriel River watershed at one accessible location that integrates indoor and outdoor exhibits and interpretive features.

**PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD:** Environmental documentation for the proposed San Gabriel River Discovery Center at Whittier Narrows consists of a *draft Environmental Assessment*. This document will be circulated for a 30-day public review period, to begin on July 22, 2009 and end on August 20, 2009. Copies of the document are available for review at the following locations:

- ***South El Monte Library, 1430 North Central Avenue, South El Monte, CA 91733***
- ***El Monte Library, 3224 North Tyler Avenue, El Monte, CA 91731***
- ***Pico Rivera Library, 9001 Mines Avenue, Pico Rivera, CA 90660***

A copy of the document will also be posted online at <http://discoverycenterauthority.org/>. All comments must be submitted in writing to the address provided below. Comment letters must be postmarked by August 20, 2009.

Carvel Bass  
Operations Branch  
US Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District  
915 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 11063  
Los Angeles, CA 90017

**Evaluation Factors:** The USACE decision whether or not to proceed with this action will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact including cumulative impacts of the proposed action on the public interest. The decision will reflect the national concern for protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit(s) which may reasonably be expected to accrue from the proposal must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the proposal will be considered including the cumulative effects thereof. Factors that will be considered include: conservation, economics, general environmental concerns, aesthetics, cultural resources, biological resources, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, soil erosion, recreation, water quality, safety, and the general needs and welfare of the public.