

San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority

Governing Board of the Authority

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Russ Guiney, Vice President, LA Co. Dept. of Parks & Recreation

George Cole, Central Basin Municipal Water District

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Sam Pedroza, Chair, Stakeholder Committee

Valorie Shatynski, Executive Officer

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

To: State Clearinghouse, Responsible and Trustee Agencies, and Interested Individuals

Subject: Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report for the San Gabriel River Discovery Center at Whittier Narrows Project

Lead Agency: San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority
900 South Fremont Avenue, Annex 2nd Floor
Alhambra, CA 91802
Contact: Valorie Shatynski, Executive Officer
Email: vshatynski@rmc.ca.gov

Project Title: San Gabriel River Discovery Center at Whittier Narrows

The San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority, as the Lead Agency, will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project described below. We would like to know the views of interested persons, organizations, and agencies as to the scope and content of the information to be included and analyzed in the EIR. Agencies should comment on the elements of the environmental information that are relevant to their statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project.

The project description, location, and potential environmental effects of the proposed project (to the extent known) are contained in this Notice of Preparation (NOP). The CEQA Initial Study is available for review online at <http://www.rmc.ca.gov/discovery/index.html>.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response to this NOP should be sent at the earliest possible date, but **not later than 30 days** after issuance of this notice on September 29, 2006. Please send your written response to:

San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority
900 South Fremont Avenue, Annex 2nd Floor
Alhambra, CA 91802
Contact: Valorie Shatynski, Executive Officer
Email: vshatynski@rmc.ca.gov

Responses should include the name of a contact person at your agency.

11310 Valley Boulevard, El Monte, CA 91731
Phone: (626) 458-7174 • Fax: (626) 979-5363 • E-mail: vshatynski@rmc.ca.gov

Scoping Meeting:

A scoping meeting for this project will be held on **Wednesday, September 27, 2006** at **South El Monte High School** (1001 North Durfee Avenue in South El Monte, California) at **7:00 PM**. Public comments related to the scope and content of the EIR will be accepted at the scoping meeting. If you have questions about the scoping meeting, please contact Joan Rupert, Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation at (213) 351-5126 or jrupert@lacountyparks.org.

Background:

The San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority (Authority) was established to oversee the planning and operation of the Discovery Center. The Authority consists of the Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District, the Central Basin Municipal Water District, the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation (LADPR), and the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC). The community is also involved in the creation of the Discovery Center through stakeholder committees.

Project Location:

The San Gabriel River Discovery Center (Discovery Center) project site is located within the Whittier Narrows Recreation Area (Recreation Area) in eastern Los Angeles County. The Recreation Area is located between the San Gabriel River and the Rio Hondo (a tributary of the Los Angeles River), approximately 10 miles east of downtown Los Angeles. The Recreation Area is surrounded by South El Monte and Rosemead to the north, the City of Industry to the east, Pico Rivera to the south, and Montebello to the west. Pockets of unincorporated County land are located to the east and west of the Whittier Narrow Recreation Area. The project site is located less than one mile from the intersection of the San Gabriel River Freeway (I-605) and the Pomona Freeway (SR 60). The project site is bound by Durfee Avenue to the north, open space to the east and south, and a commercial/industrial parcel to the west.

Project Description:

The Discovery Center project consists of a new building and site construction on approximately 8 acres within the Recreation Area. The primary project features include a main building, parking lot, maintenance building, open air classroom, constructed wetland, covered outdoor classroom, and connecting pathways from these locations. The existing Whittier Narrows Nature Center would be demolished in order to construct the Discovery Center main building. The new one-story, approximately 18,230-square-foot building would be located on the western portion of the project site along Durfee Avenue. The main building would include a lobby, exhibit areas, classrooms, support facilities, and administrative offices, including a Los Angeles County Sheriff substation. Access to the main building would be provided at the existing driveway location on the south side of Durfee Avenue. A new 150-car parking lot would be constructed on the eastern portion of the project site. The maintenance building would be located on the eastern end of the parking lot and would provide parking for maintenance vehicles, material storage, and office space for site maintenance staff. Parking for bicycles would also be provided.

Potential Environmental Effects:

Based on the existing environmental resources and anticipated uses, potential environmental effects that will likely be addressed in the EIR, include:

- Aesthetic impacts associated with tree removal and new construction;
- Air quality impacts associated with construction equipment and operational traffic;
- Potential conflicts between sensitive wildlife species/natural communities and development of the proposed facilities, and compliance with Significant Ecological Areas requirements as designated by the County of Los Angeles;
- Impacts to cultural resources from grading and site development;
- Site drainage and water quality impacts associated with storm water runoff;
- Noise associated with construction and operational activities, including project-generated traffic; and
- Traffic and circulation issues, including ingress/egress.

If the potential to take threatened and endangered species is identified, the EIR will describe future State and Federal consultation and permit requirements that will be necessary for development and the types of typical mitigation expected.

Intended Use of the EIR:


The San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority will use the EIR to consider the environmental effects, mitigation measures, and alternatives, when reviewing the proposed San Gabriel River Discovery Nature Center at Whittier Narrows Project for approval. Responsible agencies may also use the EIR as needed for subsequent discretionary actions.

As the underlying property owner, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for this project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The NEPA and CEQA processes will be undertaken concurrently for this project in separate environmental documents.

This document was prepared by EDAW, Inc. on behalf of the San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority.

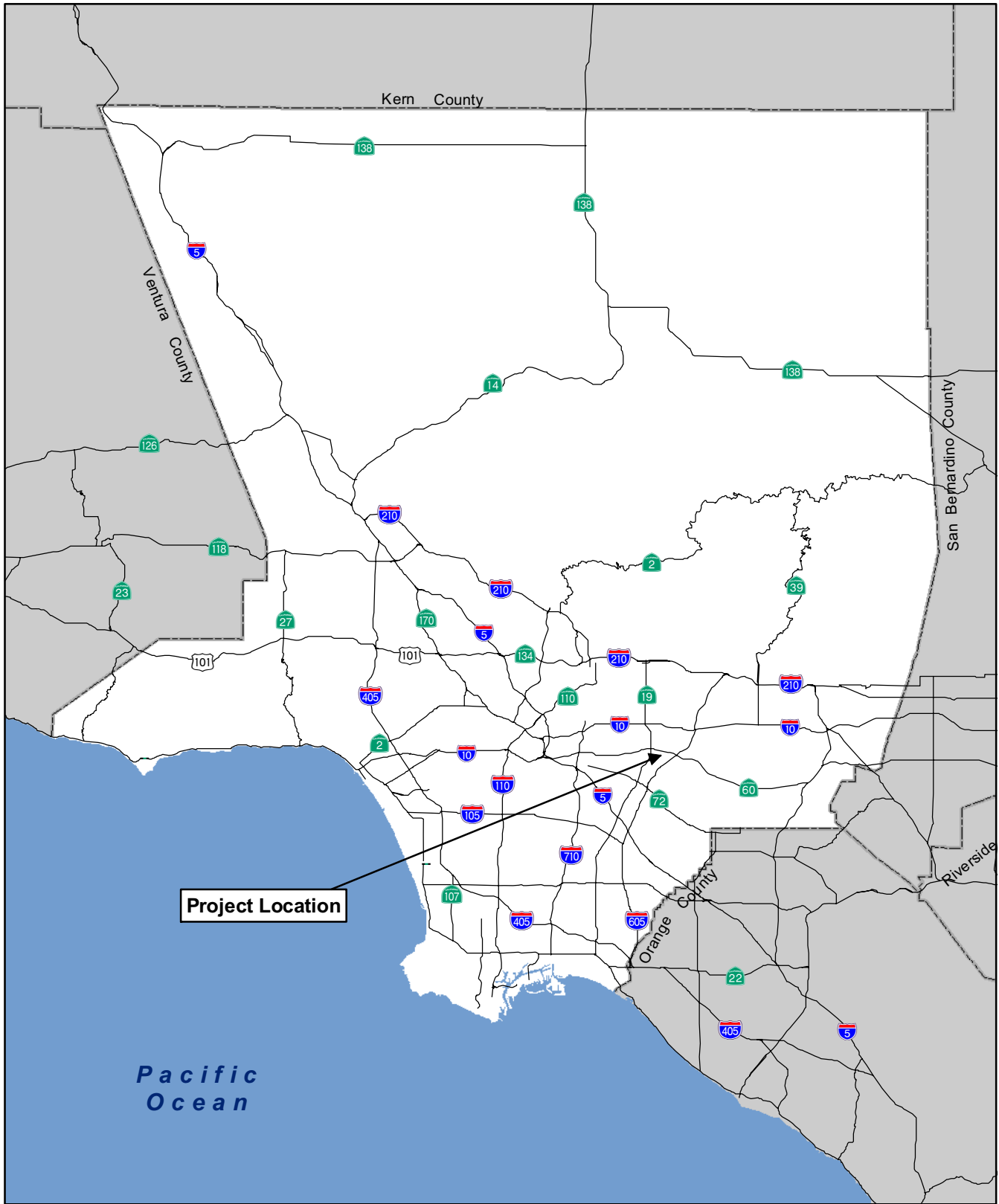
Date: August 31, 2006

Signed:



Valorie Shatynski, Executive Officer
San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority

Attachments: Regional Vicinity Map
Project Location Map
Site Plan



Source: California Geospatial Information Library (2003-5)

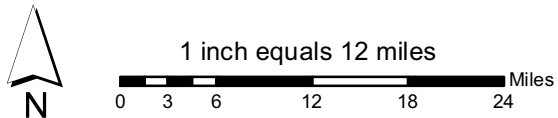
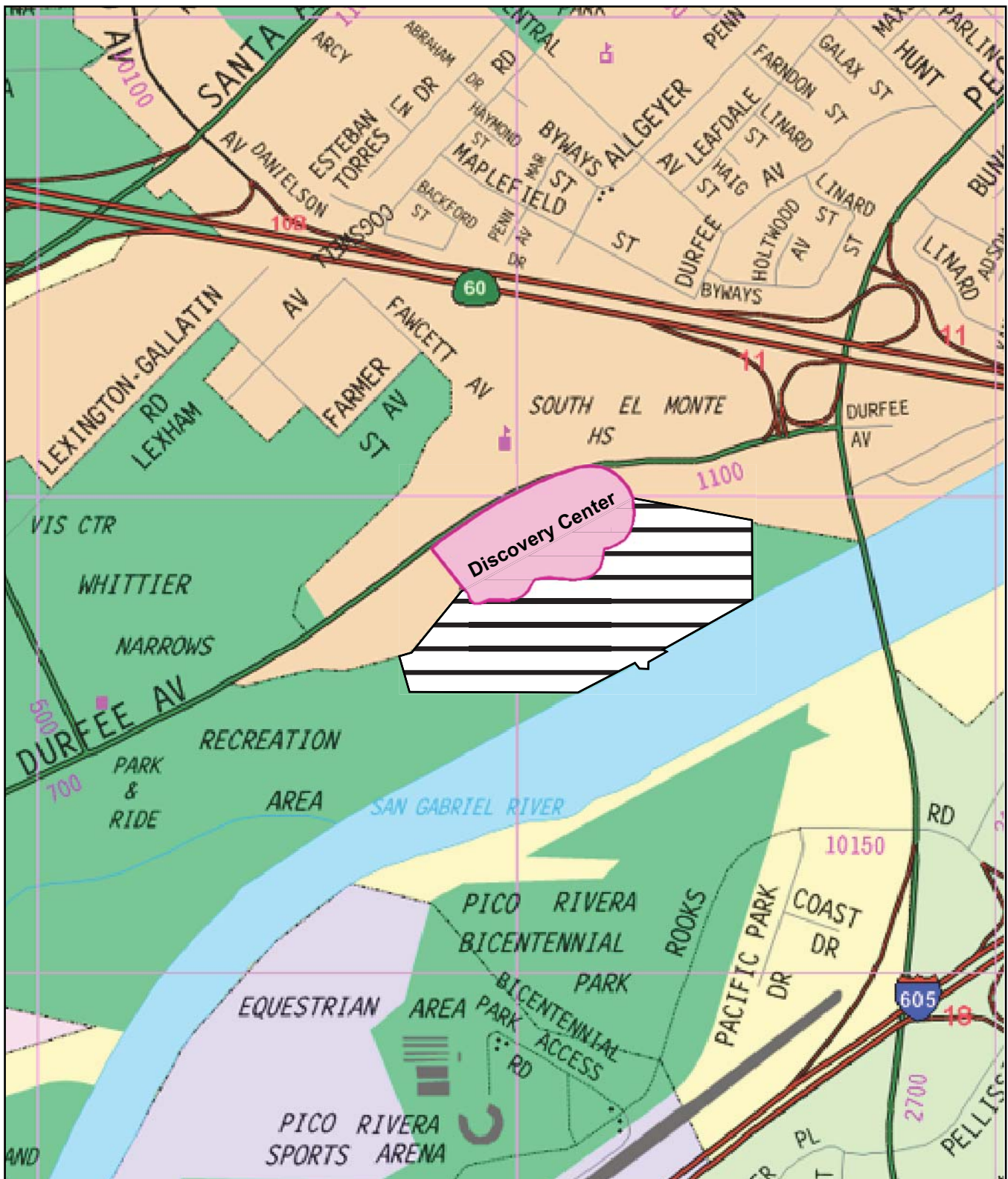


Figure 1
Regional Location Map



Source: Thomas Brothers (2006)

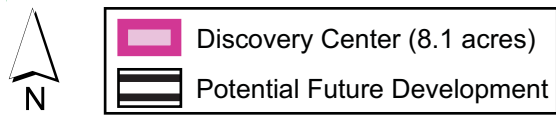


Figure 2
Vicinity Map



Source: Thomas Hacker Architects (May 2006)



Figure 3
Conceptual Site Plan