



L.A. River Feasibility Study Letter of Comment

My name is Giulia Good Stefani, and I am an attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council. I am testifying here on behalf of myself and NRDC's more than 1 million members and activists, approximately 250,000 of whom are Californians.

I am happy that the US Army Corps, City, and other agencies have worked together and with so many of us to be on the same side of the Los Angeles River Ecosystem Restoration, and I thank the Corps for this opportunity to comment on the Restoration Plan.

Decades ago, the LA River was mismanaged by short term thinking and an overly zealous *past* Army Corps of Engineers. Today, the River and the plans that have sprung up to restore it, have become a symbol of hope in this modern age. Hope that America's second largest city—that suffers daily from all the consequences of past mistakes and an incredible concentration of industry and human activity—can turn an environmental wrong into a RIGHT. This is a message that will reverberate across the country.

Alternative 13 just won't do. It won't fully restore the riparian zone or marsh habitat, bringing back ecological processes and increasing biological diversity. Alternative 13 will not adequately increase habitat connectivity. *Only* alternative 20 will connect wildlife from the Verdugo hills to the river. The Army Corps model fails to adequately consider the enormous benefit of connecting major tributary and mountainous areas to the river; the connectivity of the Verdugo Wash to the mountains is a critical component of any ecosystem plan and must be included in the Federal project.

Only alternative 20 will fully realize the River's potential to bring green space to park poor, underserved neighborhoods, because only Alternative 20 will provide a hydrological link to the LA historic Park (the Cornfields Park), a park that serves downtown and the Chinatown area and that NRDC has a long commitment to supporting.

The inclusion of the Verdugo Wash and Piggyback Yard, coupled with the other elements of Alternative 20, provide double the length of channel restoration as Alternative 13. Increased restoration of a part of an ecosystem benefits the sustainability of the entire ecosystem. You don't just gain the benefit of Verdugo Wash; you benefit all 11 miles of the Restoration Project.

For these reasons, we stand with our other river advocate allies and the City of Los Angeles in our firm support of Alternative 20. Alternative 20 is the visionary and far-reaching plan that would do the river and the movement that has sprung up around it full justice.