

## **5.14 PARKS AND RECREATION**

### **5.14.1 METHODOLOGY**

This section discusses recreational facilities in the Whittier Narrows Dam Basin Recreation Area (WNDBRA) based on a field reconnaissance and review of the 1996 *Whittier Narrows Dam Basin Master Plan* by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the draft Master Development Plan Input (MDPI) prepared by Wenk Associates for the Water Conservation Authority (WCA). These documents contain information on existing improvements, recreational facilities, and land uses in the WNDBRA.

### **5.14.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS**

#### **Regulatory Setting**

Recreational facilities in the WNDBRA are subject to the regulations imposed by the USACE, as contained in the 1996 *Whittier Narrows Dam Basin Master Plan*, and as discussed in Section 5.9, Land Use and Planning, of this Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

#### ***County***

##### **County Park Rules and Regulations**

Title 17, Parks, Beaches and other Public Areas, of the *Los Angeles County Code* contains rules and regulations for County parks. The regulations include restrictions on operating hours, parking, property and vegetation removal, camping vehicles, overnight camping, animals, grazing, disturbances, alcoholic beverages, soliciting, rubbish, nudity, concessions, swimming, boating, fishing, firecrackers, explosives, smoking, riding and hiking trails, and other activities.

#### ***Local***

##### **Pico Rivera Park Regulations**

Chapter 8.44 of the *Pico Rivera Municipal Code* contains regulations on the hours of operation and unlawful activities in City parks, which include prohibitions on the use of missiles, firearms and explosives, destruction of vegetation, vandalism of structures and equipment, disposal of garbage and refuse outside trash receptacles, unleashed animals, undue loud or unusual noise, solicitation, and other activity restrictions within a pool area.

#### **Environmental Setting**

##### ***Existing Recreational Uses***

The WNDBRA is developed with a number of parks and recreational facilities operated by the County of Los Angeles and the City of Pico Rivera. These include:

- BMX Facility;
- LA Rifle and Revolver Range;
- Model Airplane/Model Car Hobby Area;
- Baseball and Soccer Fields;
- Picnic pavilions and tables;

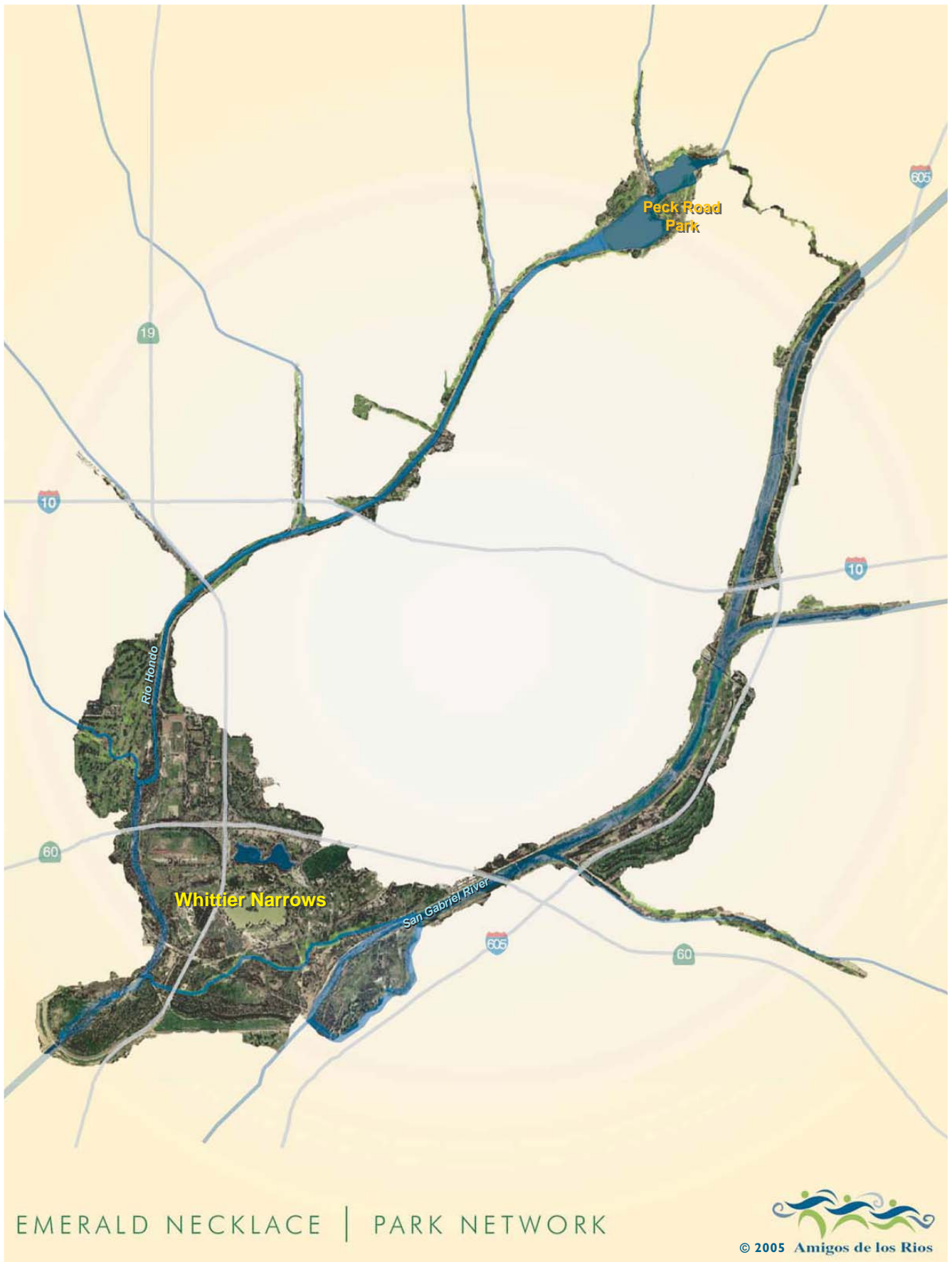
- Tot lots;
- Group picnic area with playfields;
- Whittier Narrows Tennis Center;
- Military Museum;
- Dog Show Area;
- Triple B Clays facility;
- Archery Range;
- Sporting dog area;
- Lakes and dock for fishing and paddle boating;
- Group picnic area;
- Fitness routes;
- Model boat course;
- Play equipment;
- Disc golf courses;
- Picnic areas with playground;
- Equestrian Center and Stables;
- Bicentennial Park/Sports Arena;
- Group picnic area/pavilions;
- Campgrounds (not in use);
- Whittier Narrows Golf Course;
- Driving range;
- Clubhouse ;
- Trails;
- Nature Center and Museum;
- Pico Rivera Golf Course;
- Streamland Park; and
- Public events at the stadium/arena (USACE 1996, Wenk et al 2010).

### ***Emerald Necklace***

The WND BRA is part of the Emerald Necklace, a vision for an approximately 17-mile regional greenway system that will connect parks and open space areas along the Rio Hondo and San Gabriel River to serve 16 cities and over 500,000 residents in the surrounding area (See Exhibit 5.14-1). This plan is being spearheaded by the Amigos De Los Rios, with support from the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, the Sierra Club, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, and various cities, school districts, and homeowners associations (Amigos de los Rios 2010).

### ***Trails***

The Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation (LACDPR) maintains a multi-use trail for pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians along the western levee of the Rio Hondo, along



EMERALD NECKLACE | PARK NETWORK

  
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**Emerald Necklace**

**Exhibit 5.14-1**

WNCBRA



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the flood flow channel through the Natural Area, on both levees of the San Gabriel River, and along the Bicentennial Park access road to the Puente Hills (Wenk et al 2010).

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works (LACDPW) maintains a bicycle trail along the eastern levee of the Rio Hondo, through the Natural Area (Siphon Bike Trail), and on the northern levee of the San Gabriel River to the Nature Center. The LACDPW also maintains a bike trail on the western levee of the Rio Hondo running southwesterly from San Gabriel Boulevard (Wenk et al 2010).

### **5.14.3 THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The following significance criteria are derived from Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines. The project would result in a significant adverse impact related to recreation if it would:

**Threshold 5.14.1:** *Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated;*

**Threshold 5.14.2:** *Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities, which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment; or*

**Threshold 5.14.3:** *Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered park facilities, need for new or physically altered park facilities, the construction of which would cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for park services.*

### **5.14.4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

#### **Project Design Features**

The MDPI includes recommendations for proposed recreational facilities within the WNDBRA, such as natural area river parks along the Rio Hondo and San Gabriel River; various recreational facilities in unused or underutilized sites; and new trails within the WNDBRA. Specific proposals for new or improved recreational facilities are discussed in Section 4.0, Project Description, of this EIR.

#### **Standard Conditions**

There are no standard conditions that specifically relate to recreation.

#### **Impact Analysis**

##### ***Increased Use of Parks***

**Threshold 5.14.1:** **Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?**

Implementation of the proposed MDPI would lead to the restoration of natural habitats and the increase in recreational opportunities at the WNCDBRA. The MDPI seeks to decrease users within areas supporting native vegetation or providing wildlife habitats but increase users in designated recreational areas. The proposed programs, facilities, and improvements in the MDPI would not create a demand for recreation or directly increase the use of existing facilities in the WNCDBRA. However, the proposed facilities would provide additional opportunities for recreation, which would meet demand in the region and may promote greater use of the WNCDBRA through new visitors that previously did not come to the WNCDBRA. Some facilities would be used in conjunction with other facilities (i.e., loop trails, river crossings, fitness stations, and fishing areas), while others would attract a new user population (i.e., mountain bike facility, campground, and amphitheater). With the greater use of existing and proposed recreational facilities, deterioration of these facilities may also be greater or faster.

The proposed recreational facilities would be operated by the County of Los Angeles or the City of Pico Rivera; each maintains leases within portions of the WNCDBRA. As with existing recreational uses, the proposed facilities would likely be operated by concession or other arrangement between WCA (or a partner agency) and the USACE, with vehicle entrance fees or other revenue streams to fund operation and maintenance of the facilities. Continued implementation of the County's park rules and regulations would allow for the preservation, maintenance, and use of the park for regional residents. Ongoing and future maintenance by the LACDPR would also reduce deterioration of facilities. Increased use of the on-site facilities is expected to result in a greater amount of vehicle entrance fees to fund the needed maintenance activities. Concessionaires or event sponsors would continue to be required to provide for their maintenance and operational needs (i.e., portable toilets, traffic control, parking management, and trash removal).

The MDPI proposes to implement options for engaging volunteers for a docent program, ambassador program, clean-up activities, and volunteer ranger program at the WNCDBRA. These programs would promote and increase maintenance of the WNCDBRA, including future facilities under the MDPI. In addition, the planning process has identified funding and revenue sources for the construction and maintenance of the WNCDBRA facilities. Procurement of funds for construction and maintenance of the proposed facilities and improvements would prevent adverse impacts related to the use of the on-site facilities by visitors to the WNCDBRA. It is roughly estimated that 2.0 to 2.6 million visitors would come to the WNCDBRA annually, which is the visitation range between 2006 to 2009. Thus, impacts related to the deterioration of parks and recreational facilities would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

### ***New Recreational Facilities***

**Threshold 5.14.2: Would the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?**

The MDPI calls for a number of recreational facilities to be developed within the WNCDBRA, as listed in Table 4-1 in Section 4.0, Project Description, of this EIR. The proposed facilities would serve the recreational needs of residents in Los Angeles County and the region. Thus, beneficial impacts on recreation would occur with the implementation of the MDPI. The impacts of the proposed recreational facilities on other environmental issues are addressed throughout this EIR.

## **Park Services**

**Threshold 5.14.3: Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered park facilities, need for new or physically altered park facilities, the construction of which would cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for park services?**

The proposed facilities and improvements under the MDPI would not create a demand for parks and recreational facilities. Rather, the proposed facilities include the construction of new recreational facilities at the WNCBRA to meet the demand from the surrounding community. As a large, multi-use park, the WNCBRA facilities are also expected to serve not just the adjacent communities and the County, but the larger southern California region.

The proposed trails in the MDPI would also improve connections to different areas within the WNCBRA and to other parks and recreational facilities along the Emerald Necklace and into the Puente Hills.

The MDPI would not generate a demand for parks and recreational facilities but would expand recreational facilities at the WNCBRA for use by the surrounding community. Beneficial impacts on park/service ratios in the County would occur.

### **5.14.5 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

The analysis of cumulative impacts in terms of parks and recreation considers the demand that would be created by future growth and development in the San Gabriel Valley and in the County and by other proposed projects within the WNCBRA.

Growth and development in the San Gabriel Valley and Los Angeles County would lead to increases in the resident population and would generate an increase in demand for recreational open space and park facilities. This demand would be met by the existing and proposed facilities at the WNCBRA, as proposed by the MDPI, and other new and expanded parks and recreational facilities in the County. A number of recreational facilities are proposed in the WNCBRA by the County of Los Angeles (soccer fields and Discovery Center) and the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy/Amigos del los Rios (Emerald Necklace). These cumulative projects would also help meet demand for recreational facilities.

The MDPI itself would not contribute to the cumulative demand for parks and recreation. Impacts related to deterioration due to greater use of recreational facilities at the WNCBRA would be less than significant since greater use of WNCBRA facilities would mean more vehicle entrance fees to fund maintenance activities. Thus, no significant cumulative impacts on parks and recreation would result from the proposed MDPI.

### **5.14.6 MITIGATION PROGRAM**

No significant adverse impacts on parks and recreation have been identified, and thus, no mitigation measures are required.

#### **5.14.7 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION**

The proposed MDPI would not create a demand for parks and recreational facilities, but would meet the demand for parks and recreational facilities from the surrounding area and the County. Continued maintenance activities by the USACE, the County of Los Angeles, the City of Pico Rivera, and other involved agencies or parties are expected to address deterioration due to increase use of on-site recreational facilities. No significant adverse and unavoidable impacts would occur. Cumulative impacts would be less than significant.

#### 5.14.8 REFERENCES

- Amigos de los Rios. 2010. *Emerald Necklace - Park Network*. Altadena, CA: Amigos de los Rios. <http://www.amigosdelosrios.org/necklace.htm>
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). 1996. *Whittier Narrows Dam Basin Master Plan and Environmental Assessment*. Washington, D.C.: USACE.
- Wenk Associates, Inc./Green\_Space Planning, LLC, BonTerra Consulting, Malcolm Pirnie, Inc., Amigos de los Rios, Urban Semillas, and ETM Associates (Wenk et al.). 2010. *Whittier Narrows Dam Basin Recreation Area Master Development Plan Input* (prepared for the Water Conservation Authority). Denver, CO: Wenk et al.

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