

Ventura River Watershed Management Plan

Guiding Framework

Dec., 2012

purpose

1. To tell the story of the watershed and its many interdependencies.
2. To identify and prioritize water-related concerns in the watershed.
3. To outline a strategy to collectively solve our shared watershed problems and collectively manage our shared resources.
4. To better position ourselves for funding.

goals

1. **Sufficient Local Water Supplies**

Sufficient local water supplies to allow continued independence from imported water and reliably support ecosystem and human (including urban and agricultural) needs in the watershed now and in the future, through wise water management.

2. **Clean Water**

Water of sufficient quality to meet regulatory requirements and safeguard public and ecosystem health.

3. **Integrated Flood Management**

An integrated approach to flood management that improves flood protection, restores natural river processes, enhances floodplain ecosystems, increases water infiltration and storage, and balances sediment input and transport.

4. **Healthy Ecosystems**

Healthy aquatic and terrestrial ecosystem structures, functions and processes that support a diversity of native habitats.

5. **Access to Nature**

Ample and appropriate opportunities for the public to enjoy the watershed's natural areas and open spaces associated with the watershed's aquatic habitats, to provide educational opportunities, and to gain appreciation of the need to protect the watershed and its ecosystems.

6. **Responsible Land and Resource Management**

Land and resources managed in a manner that supports social and economic goals and is compatible with healthy ecosystem goals.

7. **Coordinated Watershed Planning**

A Watershed Council that fairly represents stakeholders; collaborates on developing an integrated watershed management plan to guide watershed priorities; facilitates communication between public, private and nonprofit stakeholders; educates and engages stakeholders; provides a forum for collecting, sharing and analyzing information about, and creatively and proactively responding to, watershed issues; and maximizes grant funding opportunities.

objectives

1. Sufficient Local Water Supplies

- a. Improve water supply reliability for human needs through increased water use efficiency, conservation practices, reuse, recycling and capture.
- b. Continue to look for new and innovative water sources and storage areas in the watershed.
- c. Improve coordinated management of surface water and groundwater supplies to protect aquatic ecosystems while meeting water demands.
- d. Manage water supply costs to sustain our watershed's mixed land uses.
- e. Track the potential impacts of climate change on local water supplies so that adaptation strategies can be developed.

2. Clean Water

- a. Protect all beneficial uses of surface water and groundwater in the watershed through reductions in pathogens, nutrients, salinity, trash and other water quality impairments.
- b. Protect in-stream beneficial uses of surface water in the Ventura River and tributaries, within weather and geologic constraints.
- c. Improve near shore ocean water quality through reductions in pathogens, trash and other water quality impairments.
- d. Increase the amount of developed property that retains and treats runoff onsite.
- e. Reduce the burden and cost of compliance with water quality regulations through collaboration and innovation.
- f. Improve the usefulness of water quality monitoring data collected through data availability and statistical analysis.

3. Integrated Flood Management

- a. Minimize risks to human life and property due to flooding adjacent to Ventura River, tributaries and the ocean, and on alluvial fans, through traditional and non-traditional means.
- b. Maximize low-cost non-structural flood protection through natural floodplain restoration.
- c. Integrate ecologic value into channel designs that accommodate natural geomorphic processes.
- d. Address the lack of funding for flood management in the watershed.
- e. Improve integration among the various regulatory agencies to advance streamlined permitting.
- f. Track the potential impacts of climate change on local flood risk so that adaptation strategies can be developed.

4. Healthy Ecosystems

- a. Protect and enhance the ecosystem services, functions and values of riparian, wetland and aquatic habitats in the watershed.
- b. Increase southern California steelhead populations in the watershed through improvements to both the habitat available for spawning, rearing and over-summering, and fish passage.
- c. Protect native species' mobility and survival by improving and protecting habitat connectivity.
- d. Protect and restore habitat for species with special status at the local, state or federal level.
- e. Improve the natural transport of sediment in the Ventura River and the associated replenishment of coastal beach sands.
- f. Improve understanding of the Ventura River estuary system and feasible options to restore this ecosystem's functions and habitat values.
- g. Improve the overall biodiversity and ecosystem resiliency of the watershed.

5. Access to Nature

- a. Increase the amount of permanently protected, accessible, high quality, safe, public, open, natural areas (particularly near the river, creeks and wetlands) available for enjoyment by all community members.
- b. Provide a multimodal trail network between and within open, natural areas that is connected to population centers, and that is proportional in size and scope to the open natural areas available while not harming sensitive natural areas.
- c. Increase the number of permanently protected, vehicle-accessible, natural or semi-natural parks and picnic areas for the enjoyment of all community members.
- d. Provide interpretive opportunities, including signs, docent led tours, visitor centers, and/or other educational opportunities, to enhance visitor understanding of the watershed and its resources.

6. Responsible Land and Resource Management

- a. Improve the economic strength, viability and resiliency of the community through consistent integration of economic and social perspectives in watershed management discussions and decisions.
- b. Support a viable agricultural industry that is compatible with watershed management goals.
- c. Advance watershed management goals in local land use and resource management decisions through active engagement with policy makers and land managers.
- d. Develop and distribute information on land use sustainability and resource stewardship to improve land and resource management practices in the watershed.
- e. Track the potential impacts of climate change on local land uses and resources so that adaptation strategies can be developed.

7. Coordinated Watershed Planning

- a. Maintain and administer open and transparent Watershed Council meetings as a forum for information sharing, collaborative planning, networking and problem solving.
- b. Develop and maintain working relationships with partners, stakeholders and governments in order to improve the Watershed Council's capacity for innovation, efficiency and effectiveness.
- c. Characterize the watershed and its issues, and prioritize collaborative watershed projects to address those issues, through development of a comprehensive watershed management plan.
- d. Secure funding to support the Watershed Council's ongoing meetings, staff and operations; the implementation of priority watershed management plan projects and programs; and the development, monitoring and updating of the watershed management plan.
- e. Facilitate implementation of collaborative, multi-partner, watershed projects and programs.
- f. Facilitate public education about, engagement with and stewardship of the watershed.
- g. Maintain high standards of data quality and credibility; and improve and maintain the availability of up-to-date, user-friendly data and information about the watershed in a variety of formats, media and venues, and targeting stakeholders of different ages and backgrounds.
- h. Monitor the implementation of collaborative watershed projects and programs in order to track success and improve on strategies and tactics.

values

1. **Our watershed management plan will be pragmatic and actionable.**

While striving toward the larger watershed goals, our watershed management plan shall nonetheless have a highly pragmatic and financially realistic orientation. Our work will build upon and leverage work already done. Our recommendations shall be feasible so that we can celebrate success. We will use common sense, creatively leverage existing resources and data, look for low-hanging fruit, and consider how to get the most “bang for the buck.”

2. **Our watershed management plan will be accessible to the general public.**

We will strive to produce a watershed management plan, and other associated written materials, in a manner that conveys technical information in an interesting and easy to understand format so that it is readily accessible to members of the general public.

3. **Our watershed management plan will be unique.**

Our watershed management strategies shall acknowledge the unique circumstances of our particular watershed. We will not mimic language or strategies that do not make sense here. We will encourage innovative ideas and solutions.

4. **Our watershed management plan will acknowledge the triple bottom line.**

A healthy and sustainable watershed requires not only vibrant and well-functioning ecological systems, but also vibrant and well-functioning social and economic systems. Our watershed plan will include humans and their social and economic needs as part of an integrated and balanced approach to watershed management.

5. **Our watershed management plan will address prevention.**

Damaged habitats need restoration, but equally important is prevention of further damage. This applies not only to habitats, but also to water supply, water quality, and flood management. We will give due attention to long-term, proactive strategies, such as land use planning policies, that may be more difficult to implement in the short-term, but have the potential for significantly greater and longer-lasting benefit.

6. **Our watershed management plan will address policy.**

While the watershed management plan in itself is not a regulatory document, it our intention to nonetheless outline, for the benefit of regulators, the specific manner in which regulations are hindering or could benefit the watershed.

7. **Our watershed management plan will be technically strong.**

We hold high expectations for the technical understanding that underlies our watershed management plan. Whether in the area of science, policy, civic engagement, economics, infrastructure management, or education, we expect to rely upon analyses that are sophisticated, thorough, and endure scrutiny.

8. **Our watershed management plan will be a living document.**

It is our intention to regularly update our watershed management plan as new information becomes available and priorities change so that it continues to be relevant and useful.

The above Guiding Framework was approved by the Ventura River Watershed Council over the course of meetings in 2012.