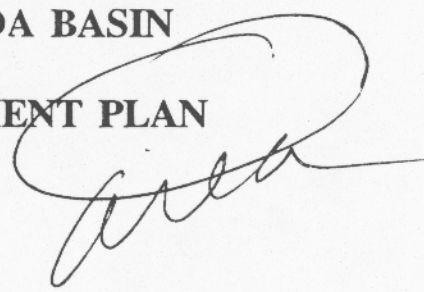


CONCEPTUAL WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PLAN

FOR THE SEPULVEDA BASIN

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PLAN

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. L. ...', is written over the title 'WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PLAN'.

Prepared for:

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
LOS ANGELES DISTRICT
300 N. Los Angeles Street
Los Angeles, California 90012**

Prepared by:

**CHAMBERS GROUP, INC.
16700 Aston Street (91714)
P.O. Box 57002 (92619-7002)
Irvine, California
(714) 261-5414**

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FOR THE SEPULVEDA BASIN
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SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

The Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Management Area is located in the eastern portion of the Sepulveda Dam and Flood Control Basin. The Sepulveda Basin is located within the city limits of Los Angeles, California, in the San Fernando Valley. The public land within the Basin is administered by the Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers (Corps). A majority of the public land, including the Wildlife Management Area, is leased to the city of Los Angeles, Department of Recreation and Parks (DRP) for recreational development. The purpose of this document is to present a conceptual management plan for the Wildlife Management Area.

The goals of the management plan are to enhance the area for wildlife, develop self-sustaining habitats, and increase the interpretive and educational opportunities in the Wildlife Management Area. In addition to these goals, development of the conceptual management plan addresses the following Corps and DRP management considerations:

- ▶ the Wildlife Management Area is within the 50-year floodplain and will be subject to periodic flooding,
- ▶ the wildlife lake and pond will receive a perennial flow of water,
- ▶ the management of the wildlife area will conform to the existing management plan for the wildlife lake, and
- ▶ particular standards for public access and safety must be considered.

Section 2 describes in the location and existing conditions of the wildlife area and alternative conceptual plans that were considered for implementation. Section 3 describes the preferred conceptual plan for enhancement and management of the Wildlife Management Area. Section 4 presents the bibliography of sources consulted to prepare the document, and Section 5 lists the persons and agencies consulted in relation to preparing of the management plan.

SECTION 2 DEVELOPMENT OF MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

This section describes the physical setting of the Wildlife Management Area and the existing biological resources at the site that were evaluated in development of management alternatives. The management alternatives considered are described, and the preferred management alternative is identified.

2.1 LOCATION OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

The Wildlife Management Area is located in the eastern portion of the Sepulveda Basin, south of the Tillman Water Reclamation Plant (TWRP), east of Woodley Avenue, west of the San Diego Freeway, and both north and south of Burbank Boulevard. The designated wildlife area comprises approximately 60 acres north of Burbank Boulevard and 48 acres south of Burbank Boulevard.

The Wildlife Management Area is buffered on the south and east by the Sepulveda Dam and on the west by Haskell Channel. Sod farms occupy the area west of Haskell Channel to Woodley Avenue, west of Woodley Avenue, and south of Woodley Avenue Park to Burbank Boulevard.

Most of the Sepulveda Basin open space is developed parkland or agricultural lands; however, of the 14,300 feet of the Los Angeles River that passes through the basin, approximately 8,000 feet of channel length are natural, including a dense native riparian habitat. This natural portion of the Los Angeles River is west of the Wildlife Management Area.

2.2 EXISTING BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

In general, the Sepulveda Basin is considered an important area for birds, especially migrating waterfowl. Approximately 200 species of birds have been identified in the basin, including some species that are considered rare. The Wildlife Management Area supports a freshwater lake, a small pond, and several vegetation communities, including willow-cottonwood woodland, willow scrub, mulefat scrub, and ruderal vegetation. Figure 1 shows the existing habitats in the Wildlife Management Area. Appendix A contains a complete list of the plants and wildlife observed during the surveys on December 4, 1992, January 28, and March 11, 1993.

Revegetation along portions of the east side of Haskell Channel includes dense riparian stands of cottonwoods (*Populus fremontii*) and willows (*Salix* sp.) with adjacent stands of mulefat (*Baccharis salisifolia*). The west side of the channel is vegetated with weedy species. Intermittent emergent vegetation exists in the channel.

The wildlife lake east of Haskell Channel and north of Burbank Boulevard supports few riparian species and is ringed with wild rhubarb (*Rumex hymenosepalus*). This freshwater lake encompasses 10 acres with a 1-acre island located in the lake. The wildlife lake presently

supports no emergent vegetation and no submerged vascular plants. Although mosquito fish and bottom algal growth are present, no aquatic invertebrates or amphibians were observed in the lake. This lake has a capacity of 13.1 million gallons and is currently flushed with 4.7 million gallons of water each day from the TWRP. A detailed management plan for the lake has been developed that outlines lake operations and maintenance, including vegetation management and water quality monitoring (DRP 1991).

The lake and surrounding vegetation support a variety of wildlife species, including both migratory and resident species. Some of the wildlife observed using the lake include the Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*), American wigeon (*Anas americana*), blue-winged teal (*Anas discors*), green-winged teal (*Anas crecca*), northern shoveler (*Anas clypeata*), Ross' goose (*Chen rossii*), and snow goose (*Chen caerulescens*). The vegetation between the lake and Haskell Channel has been planted and includes cottonwoods, willows, golden currant (*Ribes aureum*), and wild rose (*Rosa californica*). The wildlife species using this vegetation include yellow-rumped warbler (*Dendroica coronata*), palm warbler (*Dendroica palmarum*), Anna's hummingbird (*Calypte anna*), song sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*), California towhee (*Pipilo crissalis*), and red-winged blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*). Evidence of the presence of other wildlife included coyote (*Canis latrans*), fox and rabbit tracks, and scat from skunk, fox, and coyote.

The area east of the lake and extending to the dam contains ruderal species, including mustards (*Brassica* sp.), annual grasses (*Bromus* sp.), Russian thistle (*Salsola iberica*), and some mulefat. The open grasslands east of the lake provides forage for great egrets (*Casmerodius albus*), snowy egret (*Egretta thula*), Canada geese, and several raptor species, including American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) and Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*). At the south end of the pond is an ephemeral wetland that presently supports mustards and grasses, but few cattails or other marsh plants.

Revegetation has been initiated along the slopes north and south of Burbank Boulevard, and plantings include oaks (*Quercus agrifolia* and *Q. lobata*), sugar bush (*Rhus ovata*), laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), fuchsia-flowering gooseberry (*Ribes speciosum*), California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), and other coastal sage scrub components. Wildlife species typical of coastal sage scrub were observed in the scrub vegetation south of Burbank Boulevard. These include the California thrasher (*Toxostoma redivivum*), white-crowned sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*), California towhee, bushtit (*Psaltriparus minimus*), western kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*), and western fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*).

South of Burbank Boulevard, the Wildlife Management Area contains a small pond that has been surrounded with planted ash (*Fraxinus dipetala*), bay laurel (*Umbellularia californica*), and willows. Some of the wildlife species observed near this small pond include mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), cinnamon teal (*Anas cyanoptera*), black-crowned night heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), belted kingfisher (*Ceryle alcyon*), American coot (*Fulica americana*), common yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*), and black phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*). Large stands of mulefat and broom (*Baccharis emoryi*) also occur. Approaching the southern part of the dam, annual grasses and cocklebur (*Xanthium strumarium*) comprise a major component of the vegetation. The areas adjacent to the Los Angeles River are either devoid of vegetation or are densely vegetated with cocklebur, conditions likely caused by flooding in these areas. Turkey

vulture (*Cathartes aura*), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), Cooper's hawk, and American kestrel were observed foraging over the open areas south of Burbank Boulevard.

The riparian zones south of Burbank Boulevard along both the Haskell Channel have dense willow and mulefat vegetation. The Los Angeles River in this area is channelized. Both Haskell Channel and the Los Angeles River contain trash (e.g., plastic bags, shopping carts) from the recent flood events of the 1992-1993 winter season.

The sod farms west of the Wildlife Management Area provide forage areas for some of the waterfowl species found in the basin, especially the Canada goose. Other nearby resources for wildlife in the basin are the natural stretches of the Los Angeles River and the Encino Channel that are lined with dense riparian vegetation. These riparian areas are adjacent to the southwestern tip of the Wildlife Management Area and follow the Los Angeles River north and the Encino Channel west.

2.3 WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

Three management alternatives were considered for enhancement of the wildlife area: (1) exclusive waterfowl management, (2) waterfowl/multispecies management, and (3) minimal management. Each alternative was evaluated for the following factors:

- ▶ maintenance management,
- ▶ wildlife value,
- ▶ educational opportunities,
- ▶ volunteer contribution, and
- ▶ public safety conditions.

The three alternatives are briefly described below.

2.3.1 Exclusive Waterfowl Management Alternative

This alternative would allow design of the Wildlife Management Area to attract waterfowl, with an emphasis on management for migrating species such as the Canada goose. The management emphasis would maintain an open area for wildlife foraging east of the wildlife lake. Forage could be provided through low-intensity farming of crops such as barley or sorghum in the open, flat fields of the Wildlife Management Area. Grain or seed crops would provide a food source for rodent and bird species; therefore, raptors would be expected to be key species in the area. Fallow fields would attract other bird species such as the California horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris actia*) and the tricolor blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*). Enhancement of riparian vegetation would be conducted in the areas between Haskell Channel and the wildlife lake and in the area of the small pond south of Burbank Boulevard.

Management considerations would include routine maintenance of the wildlife lake and surrounding area. The low-intensity agricultural forage crop would require seasonal cultural operations. Initial enhancement of the riparian vegetation would involve planting and initial