



Photo by Diane Rivera Estella, USACE Headquarters

Lt. Gen. Scott Spellmon, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers commanding general and 55th chief of engineers, center, signed a chief's report Oct. 14 recommending the Port of Long Beach Deep Draft Navigation Plan to Congress at the Corps' headquarters in Washington, D.C. The plan could be included in the next Water Resources Development Act. A separate bill to appropriate funding to the plan would also have to be passed by Congress for the plan to move forward to construction.

Corps' chief signs report to move Port of Long Beach deep-draft navigation project big step forward

By Dena O'Dell
LA District Public Affairs

LOS ANGELES – Officials with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District and the Port of Long Beach are one step closer to improving navigation efficiencies and safety for existing and prospective commerce within the port with the signing of a chief's report for the project.

The Port of Long Beach Deep-Draft Navigation Feasibility Report – which aims to improve and modify existing channels in the port by deepening them to accommodate larger cargo ships – was signed Oct. 14 by Lt. Gen. Scott Spellmon, the Corps' commanding general and 55th U.S. Army chief of engineers, at the Corps' headquarters in Washington, D.C.

With Spellmon's signature, the report is now elevated to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, U.S. Office of

Management and Budget, and to Congress for consideration of project authorization.

The ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles are responsible for 40 percent of the nation's cargo throughput. The Port of Long Beach is the nation's second-busiest port and moves more than \$200 billion in goods each year.

"The deepening and widening of these channels is of vital importance to the nation's economy," said Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero. "Keep in mind, we are the nation's second-busiest port by container volume. Increasing the efficiency and speed that cargo is handled here has benefits to the whole supply chain reaching far beyond Southern California."

The Corps' recommended plan consists of the following navigation improvements at the port (all depths are Mean Lower Low Water):

Deepening the approach channel from -76 feet to -80 feet;

Bend easing within portions of the main channel to -76 feet;

Constructing an approach channel to Pier J South from -50 feet to -55 feet;

Constructing a turning basin outside of Pier J South from -50 feet to -55 feet; and,

Deepening the West Basin from -50 feet to -55 feet.

Additional improvements by port authorities include deepening Pier J Basin, berths J266-J270, within the Pier J South Slip to -55 feet; and structural improvements to the Pier J breakwaters to accommodate dredging of the Pier J Basin and approach channel.

"We look forward to continuing our partnership with the Port of Long Beach to increase transportation efficiencies for container and liquid bulk vessels, for both the current and future fleet, and improve conditions

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We are the faces of change!



As federal employees and retirees, we represent a strong, caring community through the Combined Federal Campaign. Every year, we have the chance to give to our favorite charities through the CFC at <https://givecfc.org>.

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for vessel operations and safety,” said Col. Julie Balten, commander of the Corps’ Los Angeles District.

Estimated total cost of the project is more than \$145 million, with a nearly 50/50 cost share between the federal government and the port.

Dredged material from the project will be placed at a nearshore placement site and disposed of at two Environmental Protection Agency-designated, ocean-dredged material disposal sites – LA-2 and LA-3. Further opportunities for the beneficial reuse of dredged material from the project will be evaluated during the Preconstruction Engineering and Design phase.

In cooperation with the port’s “Green Port Policy,” the plan also

includes constructing a new electric dredge substation and the use of an electronic clamshell dredge to perform dredging at the Pier J Basin, as well as the West Basin, main channel and the Pier J turning basin.

“This study was long in the making, and we thank the Army Corps of Engineers and all of the stakeholders who participated,” said Long Beach Harbor Commission President Steven Neal. “These projects would help move cargo faster and save transportation costs. We look forward to working with our federal partners to make them a reality.”

More information about the project can be found at: <https://www.spl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Projects-Studies/Port-of-Long-Beach-Deep-Draft-Navigation-Study/>.

Have a story idea?
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November is full of reasons to be thankful

SPL Team,

This month we have so much to honor, celebrate and pay tribute to!

November is National Native American Heritage Month (also known as National American Indian Heritage Month), which honors American Indians and Alaska Natives. This year’s theme is “Resilient and Enduring: We Are Native People,” during which we celebrate and honor the hundreds of Native American tribes and millions of individuals in the United States. It’s also the perfect opportunity learn more about the rich ancestry, traditions and the countless contributions their communities have made and continue to make.

We also pay tribute to the service of our brave men and women who have served our



Col. Julie Balten
District Commander

nation’s military. We now have the largest population of young veterans since the Vietnam War, and we are committed to taking care of these unsung heroes.

On this Veterans Day, I hope you took the time to reflect on the countless sacrifices the millions of men and women have made to this nation when they selflessly answered the call to serve our nation. These brave men and women took an oath to protect this country while proudly wearing the uniform.

Here in the Los Angeles District we have the unique opportunity to make a direct impact by building hospital facilities for our veterans – both at the Long Beach and San Diego Veterans Affairs campuses, and potential future projects in the greater Los Angeles.

Veterans make up half of the Army Civilians

Corps, and I’m so proud that many of those veterans serve right here with the Mighty LA District.

I want to use this opportunity to thank not only our veterans, but our family members too, as November is Military Family Appreciation Month. I feel extremely fortunate to have such a wonderful, supportive family, and I have met so many in the district who feel the same about their own families.

And that brings me to Thanksgiving at the end of the month. We have so much to be thankful for every day, but Thanksgiving is a day when we can gather with friends and family, eat good food and give thanks. I encourage all of you to take the time to make each day Thanksgiving this month and always.

Sincerely,

Col. Julie Balten

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The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey is an annual government-wide survey, administered by U.S. Office of Personnel Management, which measures federal employees’ perceptions of critical work-life areas that drive employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention across the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers workforce. The survey results provide valuable insight to senior leaders on the strengths of the civilian workforce, as well as gauging areas for improvement and current challenges. Emails will be sent for FEVS, titled in part “2021 OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey.” If you see that in your inbox, please participate.



Grounded in Tradition Resilient in Spirit

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The United States of America was founded on an idea: that all of us are created equal and deserve equal treatment, equal dignity, and equal opportunity throughout our lives. Throughout our history — though we have always strived to live up to that idea and have never walked away from it — the fact remains that we have fallen short many times. Far too often in our founding era and in the centuries since, the promise of our Nation has been denied to Native Americans who have lived on this land since time immemorial.

Signed — President Joseph R. Biden Jr.

Full presidential proclamation @ [go.usa.gov/xeCzb](https://www.go.usa.gov/xeCzb)



A steady stream of contracted workers fill one of 82 dumpsters used during the San Gabriel River and San Jose Creek cleanup. A total of 575 tons of debris were removed during the two-week project. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District cleared about 120 acres of riverbank, Sept. 27-Oct. 22.

Corps river, creek cleanup project removes 575 tons of debris

Story and photo by William John Reese
LA District Public Affairs

After months of planning and coordinating with local partners and four weeks of hard work, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District completed a project cleaning homeless encampment debris from the banks of the San Gabriel River and San Jose Creek near Whittier Narrows Dam, Oct. 22, in the San Gabriel Valley, California.

“This debris cleanup was imperative to the upcoming multi-year sediment and vegetation removal at the confluence of San Gabriel River and San Jose Creek,” said Lt. Col. Malia Pearson, program manager.

Setting up the project to remove so much trash from such a large area at the convergence of creek and river began last spring. Before the project could begin, the District Operations Division partnered with multiple city and county agencies, including neighborhood organizations. Signage advising the cleanup was coming was posted Sept. 13, and LA county social services and Veterans Affairs

combed the wooded banks, offering assistance to those found camping on the Corps managed land.

Pearson said the cleanup was necessary as preparation for a future levee repair project that could begin in 2024, depending on funding.

“This levee repair project will address the safety concerns for the city of South El Monte and especially the neighborhood behind the western levee should the levee fail,” Pearson explained, noting the western levee has been eroded due to the impingement caused by the sediment at the confluence.

Living in a riverbed is always a dangerous risk, Pearson added, noting the campsites were within the boundaries of the levees.

“The occurrence of flash flooding with the LA basin is always a potential concern,” she said. “Should flooding occur, these individuals would be in grave danger. For their safety, we worked closely with law enforcement and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) to find safer accommodations.”

Work began daybreak on Sept. 27 in San Jose Creek. Contractors hauled trash, shopping

carts, bundles of Arundo donax reeds used to build campsites, abandoned vehicles, propane tanks and gasoline cans from abandoned illegal campsites. Scores of big dumpsters were filled and refilled until the last semi pulled away.

“A total of 82 40-cubic-yard dumpsters were filled, removing 575 tons of trash and debris in the San Jose Creek and San Gabriel River,” said Corps project manager Trevor Snyder. Snyder was responsible for the collaboration effort with partner agencies such as LAHSA, LA County Department of Mental Health, the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department and more. “A massive undertaking.”

About 120 acres of riverbank northeast of the interchange of Interstate 605 and State Route 60 were cleaned of debris during the four-week project.

An adjacent stretch of land along the San Gabriel managed by the LA District was cleaned up about a year ago. The Corps maintains more than 50 miles of channels and levees within the San Gabriel, Los Angeles and Rio Hondo rivers, and Compton and Ballona creeks.



Los Angeles District team members Spencer MacNeil, left, chief of the Transportation and Special Projects Branch, and Jeniffer Aleman-Zometa, manager for Regulatory Project, discuss the recovery of Agua Chinon Wash after the Dec. 14 Silverado wildfire, Sept. 16, in Irvine, California. The area, an elderberry scrubland is sandwiched between Interstate 5 and a ridgeline of steep box canyons.

Corps partners with OCTA mitigation program to preserve Orange County natural habitats

Story and photos by William John Reese
LA District Public Affairs

LOS ANGELES – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District recently collaborated with several other agencies to publish a case study that aims at assisting transportation, resource and regulatory agencies with integrating infrastructure development and the conservation planning process.

The case study, involving the Orange County Transportation Authority’s M2 Highway/Freeway Program, is a 30-year conservation planning and permitting program that began in 2005 and brought multiple local, state and federal agencies together.

The transportation authority’s M2 program was intended to streamline the permitting and environmental review process over multiple jurisdictions, while also protecting and restoring natural habitats, as well as incorporating programmatic natural resource planning, permitting and mitigation approaches to address impacts from 13 of the transportation authority’s freeway projects.

“OCTA approached the Corps’ Regulatory Division about 10 years ago to discuss its 13 proposed freeway improvement projects and how we could go about coming up with a permitting mechanism to address aquatic resource impacts that would occur over a 30-year period along existing freeway corridors throughout the county,” said Spencer MacNeil, chief of the Transportation and Special Projects Branch with the Corps’ Regulatory Division.

The Corps decided to go through a full environmental review process up front and looked at the 13 projects with respect to impacts to Waters of the U.S., or WOTUS, which includes aquatic features, such as streams

and wetlands, as well as available compensatory mitigation for those impacts.

The team developed Section 404 letters of permission procedures, including preparing a public notice, environmental assessment, Section 404 (b)(1) alternatives analysis and conducting a public interest review – all of the things needed to set up those new procedures.

“Once those were in place, where we looked at the entirety of the program, we could look at each application for an individual project, in turn, over time, and issue an individual letter of permission to address that project’s impacts,” MacNeil said.

It was all evaluated and incorporated into the established procedures the Corps formalized through an individual permit, establishing the terms and conditions for the M2 program.

The Corps approved the compensatory mitigation as well as the impacts, which allowed the Orange County Transportation Authority to have some certainty with respect to implementing its mitigation – even in advance of its transportation project impacts to WOTUS.

The transportation authority chose to pursue advance compensatory mitigation as multiple projects – collaborating with several state and federal agencies, including the Corps; California Department of Transportation; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; California State Water Resources Control Board; California Department of Fish and Wildlife; and other regulatory and resource agencies.

In all, the M2 Program established seven preserves, totaling more than 1,300 acres of land and the restoration of 350 acres of habitat. It also expedited the permitting process for transportation projects from several months to about 45 days, once a complete application for an individual project’s impacts to WOTUS was submitted to the Corps.

SEEING LABORS COME TO FRUITION

The Corps used OCTA’s M2 Mitigation Program at Trabuco Rose Preserve, Aliso Creek and Agua Chinon Wash, where old California can be visited by current and future generations.

Veronica Li, a senior project manager with the Corps’ Regulatory Division, worked on the project for more than a decade.

Li and MacNeil, along with Jeniffer Aleman-Zometa, also a project manager with the Corps’ Regulatory Division; and Lesley Hill, project manager with the Environmental Mitigation Program, Orange County Transportation Authority, visited the three sites Sept. 16.

“I first got involved in this when I started with the Corps’ Regulatory Division in 2009,” Li recalled. “It was a good project for me to take on. At that time, we didn’t have a funding agreement with OCTA, which limited my ability to work on it, so it was my task to establish a Section 214 Water Resources Development Act funding agreement with them, so that we could become more involved.”

From that point on, Li said, she was involved in the Environmental Oversight Committee and recruited Sophia Ma, also with the Corps’ Regulatory Division, to help implement the Letter of Permission procedures.

Ma, Michelle Mattson and Corice Farrar, all with the Corps’ Regulatory Division, as well as the Orange County Transportation Authority and its consultants were a tremendous help in making the permitting effort come to fruition, Li added.

“Having funding in place that we could use to work on and prioritize the M2 program was critical to its success,” MacNeil said. “It takes significant money and time to develop large-scale, long-term permitting programs like this one. And OCTA had funds available to support the development of the M2 program, as a result of a sales tax measure extended by Orange County voters in 2006.”

During the site visit, Hill, who worked on the project for about 12 years – a decade of those as the transportation authority’s project manager – pointed out two unnamed creeks at Trabuco Rose Preserve that eventually flow into Hickey Creek.

The creeks are part of a 400-acre area controlled by the transportation authority, consisting of mostly coastal sage scrub, woodlands, chaparral, scattered oak trees and native grasslands. A small portion of the acreage includes the wetlands preserved for mitigation credits with the Corps.

“I love it when a plan comes together. It’s wonderful to see it come to fruition and to be on the ground realizing the beauty of a rehabilitated Aliso Creek.” – Spencer MacNeil,

LA District Transportation and Special Projects Branch chief

“There’s a whole slew of habitat that this wetland area is a component of,” Hill said, pointing out the confluence of the creeks into the wetlands. “It’s a really intact habitat.”

At Aliso Creek, managed by the Laguna Canyon Foundation, pond turtles sunned on the rocks amid the lush foliage along the banks. Wildlife has returned to the area.

One of the high priorities at Aliso was removing Arundo or giant reed, an invasive grass resembling bamboo that can grow up to 12 inches per day.

MacNeil knows Aliso Creek better than most; he completed his dissertation on the watershed’s streams in 2001, which also supported a Civil Works Watershed Management Study that identified and evaluated potential stream restoration projects. About 30 tons of Arundo have been removed from the creek.

“I love it when a plan comes together,” MacNeil said, recalling how it looked 20 years ago. “It’s wonderful to see it come to fruition and to be on the ground realizing the beauty of a rehabilitated Aliso Creek.”

A wildland fire Aug. 15 came close to a patch of recently planted seedlings, but firefighters were able to quench the fire without disturbing the restored area.

Agua Chinon Wash in Irvine – the last site visited Sept. 16 – is an elderberry scrubland of sheer, narrow canyons, bordered by rugged hills and Interstate 5.

The wash traverses past the former El Toro Marine Air Station, on its way to the Pacific Ocean.

The preserve suffered a significant wildland fire that slowed but didn’t stop the habitat restoration. Agua Chinon is managed by the Irvine Ranch Conservancy.

SAVING MONEY – MINIMIZING TEMPORAL LOSS

One example of how the M2 program’s approach to compensatory mitigation saves time and money is its ability to avoid or minimize temporal loss to the aquatic ecosystem, MacNeil explained, meaning the time between when project impacts occur and when implemented mitigation successfully achieves approved functional performance targets, such as having different types of native vegetation of different heights and ages at the mitigation site.

When compensatory mitigation is implemented before project impacts occur, it is possible for the mitigation site to reach high functional performance before planned impacts occur, thereby reducing, if not eliminating temporal loss of functions, that for most projects, result in additional agency required mitigation.

“Temporal loss is a frequent issue for our permittees, and it saves money if there’s less mitigation required to address it,” MacNeil said, adding the permit process is now less costly. “There’s a lot of flexibility built into this program that really benefited the M2 program, and it’s a good model to use elsewhere in the country, when there are sufficient funds and time available to evaluate a suite of projects collectively.

“While it takes substantial upfront work to comprehensively evaluate and approve the impacts and compensatory mitigation for programs like M2, addressing compensatory mitigation in advance of project impacts can reduce required mitigation and costs, and the approval of each transportation project’s impacts occurs more quickly under the permitting mechanism established for that program.”





Professionals of the LA District comprising diverse specialties host an information and outreach booth at the Día de los Muertos community event and procession Oct. 26 at the LA River Center and Gardens in LA's Cypress Park neighborhood. Hundreds of community members attended the event, which was organized by Mujeres de la Tierra, a nonprofit group whose mission is to “inspire, motivate and engage women and their children to take ownership and leadership of their neighborhood and local community issues.”

LA District employees meet community members at Día de los Muertos event

Story and photos by Stephen Baack
LA District Public Affairs

LOS ANGELES – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District professionals comprising a diverse range of specialties attended the Día de los Muertos community event and procession at the LA River Center and Gardens in LA's Cypress Park neighborhood. Hundreds of community members attended the event, which was organized by Mujeres de la Tierra, an environmental equity nonprofit group whose mission is to “inspire, motivate and engage women and their children to take ownership and leadership of their neighborhood and local community issues.”

Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) is a holiday that originated in Mexico and is observed Nov. 1 and 2, with events like this one that take place leading up to the officially designated days.

The LA District's booth was set up alongside those of other government and nonprofit

agencies in an outdoor courtyard amid lights and decorations, while intricately adorned altars (ofrendas) filled the indoor courtyard to commemorate those who have passed on.

Although the event has distinct elements of solemnity, the holiday is a celebration of the lives of the departed as their spirits are invited back briefly to play music, dance, eat and drink with the living. The joyful tone is evident in the lively and colorful costumes and face paint participants don for the event and as they walk in the procession.

The Corps team was there to provide educational materials and talk to community members of all ages and backgrounds about water safety, flood preparedness, ongoing civil works projects, environmental concerns, LA River topics, recreation and more. Bobber the Water Safety Dog also made an appearance to connect with children and their families to convey the importance of wearing a lifejacket.

“Our biggest task here is to be liaisons, and a service to the community,” said LA District

Park Ranger Annel Monsalvo, who played the role of Bobber the Water Safety Dog for part of the evening. “We’re here to bring resources and tools to the families and help them feel empowered.”

LA District Park Ranger Linda Babcock, who was also at the event, provided educational materials and talked with families about many of these topics – especially flood awareness and preparedness.

“A lot of people in the communities throughout LA don’t realize that it’s a big flood basin,” Babcock said. “We always tell the kids, ‘You learn about flood awareness and then you teach your parents.’ They love that, and it engages them.”

The flood awareness books the park rangers hand out are in both English and Spanish, and the water safety books are in English and Spanish together.

“There’s a huge Spanish-speaking community in this area,” Monsalvo said. “Being able to connect with them in their

language and to be able to give them those tools to be more prepared when emergencies happen, that’s our biggest goal.”

Also there to talk to attendees about the aforementioned topics and more – and who were vital to the Corps’ internal coordination and setup for the event – were Jennie Ayala, outreach coordinator with the district’s Programs and Project Management Division; Christopher Solek; chief of the Regional Planning in the district’s Environmental Resources Branch; Eileen K. Takata, a landscape architect who wears many hats including serving as a public involvement specialist, certified virtual facilitator trainer, watershed program manager and lead water resources planner; and Daria Mazey, plan formulation specialist with the Corps’ South Pacific Division.

Takata, who was there in her role as the LA River Watershed “ambassador” for the Urban Waters Federal Partnership, gave kudos not only to her colleagues at the event, but also to those LA District employees who helped but who were not in attendance. This included LA Park Ranger Robert Moreno, who is a part of the Corps’ National Bilingual Support Team



LA District Park Ranger Linda Babcock provides free educational materials to young attendees of the Día de los Muertos community event and procession Oct. 26 at the LA River Center and Gardens in LA's Cypress Park neighborhood.

and who translated documents and brochures for the event into Spanish.

Meeting the people the Corps serves is one of the most valuable parts of the district’s participation in events like this, Takata said.

“It was important that they could see who

we are, that we care and want to protect the public and we have a lot of expertise to offer that we want folks to know about,” she said, “but it was also important to put a face to the public that we serve, and they could put a face to us.”



(Above) Intricately adorned altars fill an indoor courtyard at the Los Angeles River Center and Gardens in LA's Cypress Park neighborhood during the Oct. 26 Día de los Muertos community event and procession organized by Mujeres de la Tierra, an LA-based environmental equity nonprofit.

(Left) Paco Cervano and his granddaughter, Una, greet Bobber the Water Safety Dog during the Oct. 26 Día de los Muertos community event and procession at the LA River Center and Gardens in LA's Cypress Park neighborhood.



Vehicle enforcement operations

Annel Monsalvo, LA District park ranger, looks out over the Mojave River Dam basin in search of any off-highway vehicle violators during a county-wide OHV enforcement operation Oct. 23 at the Mojave River Dam and its surrounding area in San Bernardino County, California.

Story and photos by Dena O'Dell
LA District Public Affairs

The Los Angeles District Park Rangers, along with two members of the LA District's Security and Law Enforcement Office, partnered with several local, state and federal agencies to participate in a county-wide off-highway vehicle enforcement operation Oct. 23 at the Mojave River Dam and its surrounding area in San Bernardino County, California.

Participants in the operation included the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers LA District; San Bernardino Sheriff's Department, including law enforcement officers with the Barstow, Victor Valley, Twin Peaks and Hesperia stations; Hesperia Park Rangers; Bureau of Land Management Park Rangers, representatives with the U.S. Forest Service; and members of the San Bernardino County Auto Theft Task Force.

During the operation, the LA District Rangers patrolled the Mojave River Dam and its surrounding area, which is federal property, and conducted off-highway vehicle outreach to remind the public that off-roading at the Mojave River Dam and the Deep Creek area is illegal and prohibited. The area is home to the Arroyo Toad, which is an endangered species, with only about 3,000 left in existence.

The LA District Rangers will continue partnering together with all agencies involved for future events.



Steven Schumacher, a representative with the U.S. Forest Service, holds up an off-highway vehicle guide that educates the public on legal and illegal areas to ride OHVs during a county-wide OHV enforcement operation Oct. 23 at the Mojave River Dam and its surrounding area in San Bernardino County, California.



(Left) From left to right, LA District Security and Law Enforcement Specialist Valente Marshall and LA District Park Rangers Henry Csaposs and Connie Chan Le look over a map of the Mojave River Dam area while participating in a county-wide off-highway vehicle enforcement operation Oct. 23 at the Mojave River Dam and its surrounding area in San Bernardino County, California.



(Right) LA District Park Ranger Henry Csaposs reminds an off-highway vehicle driver that OHV use in the Mojave River Dam Basin is prohibited during a county-wide OHV enforcement operation Oct. 23 at the Mojave River Dam and its surrounding area in San Bernardino County, California.



(Left) Drivers planning to use the Mojave River Dam Basin for off-highway vehicles turn around after LA District Park Rangers remind them that OHV use in the area is prohibited during a county-wide OHV enforcement operation Oct. 23 at the Mojave River Dam and its surrounding area in San Bernardino County, California.

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