

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 12, 2003

CONTACT:
Roy Stearns
(916) 654-7538

Taking State Parks to the Los Angeles River

State Parks Buys Riverfront Property, Linchpin for Los Angeles River Parkway

LOS ANGELES – California State Parks announced today that it has acquired its first park property which directly fronts along the Los Angeles River at Taylor Yard near downtown Los Angeles. It is an acquisition that has been the dream of neighborhood and community groups for more than a decade and is seen as the critical, centerpiece property in the effort to create a Los Angeles River Parkway.

The property is known as parcel G-1, a 17.808-acre piece of land that has been a part of the Union Pacific Taylor Yard properties. It runs for about a half-mile along the river just east of the Highway 2 Glendale Freeway bridge over the Los Angeles River. It is one of the few remaining natural habitat zones left along the river and is seen as essential for the long-term restoration of the Los Angeles River.

“We have now taken State Parks directly to the Los Angeles River,” said State Park Director Ruth Coleman. “This property is seen as the linchpin, the essential catalyst and the centerpiece for the dream of creating a Los Angeles River Parkway.”

Today, the State’s Public Works Board, meeting in public session in Sacramento, voted unanimously to grant State Parks the authority to select and acquire the G-1 parcel, clearing the way for State Parks and Union Pacific Railroad to close the deal. State Parks has reached an agreement with Union Pacific to purchase the 17.808-acres for \$10,472,000.00 and with Public Works Board approval today, escrow on the property is expected to close next week.

The acquisition funding comes from Proposition 12, the Park Bond Act of 2000, the single, largest parks bond act in the history of the nation. It was overwhelmingly approved by more than 63 per cent of voters to be used for the acquisition and development of parkland properties.

In December 2001, State Parks purchased the 40-acre Taylor Yard property known as parcel D along San Fernando Road. However, it is separated from the river by the Metrolink rail line. It was likewise purchased with Proposition 12 bond funding. It is now being developed jointly by California State Parks and the City of Los Angeles as a seamless park that includes both natural and recreational areas. The G-1 parcel is just upstream and State Parks intends to develop it as a natural riverfront area and connect it to Taylor Yard, thereby connecting the Taylor Yard property to the Los Angeles River parkland corridor.

Many believe parcels D and G are the linchpin properties for moving ahead and acquiring more of the riverfront by State Parks and other agencies to eventually create a Los Angeles River Parkway.

State Parks also owns the Cornfield property, located downstream of Taylor Yard. It does not directly touch the river, but has links for bike paths and trails to the river, thereby making it one of the connecting properties to Taylor Yard and another major part of the future Los Angeles River Parkway.

“All across the nation there are examples of neighborhoods and cities that have been revitalized by river corridor parkways,” said State Parks Southern Division Chief Ted Jackson. “This latest acquisition now opens the door for fulfilling that very dream here in Los Angeles, a world-class and beautiful greenbelt winding through the heart of this great city.”

The northernmost 17.808-acre parcel of Taylor Yard known as G-1 is contiguous to the 6-mile stretch of soft-bottomed channel of the Los Angeles River known as the “Glendale Narrows”. This is one of the few remaining natural habitat zones where one can get a glimpse of what the Los Angeles River may have looked like prior to channelization. Engineers were not able to pave this area of the river because the water table is too high. As a result, water from the immense San Fernando aquifer is forced to the surface in the form of visible artesian springs along the banks of the river. These springs are augmented by reclaimed water, which flows through the Narrows year round.

Regarding contamination of the site because of its history as an active railroad yard, the State Department of Toxic Substances Control says this particular portion of the entire Taylor Yard complex has only minimal contamination which can be easily cleaned up. This section was not part of the active maintenance and repair facility, but rather, was an area where trains were passing through with the only contamination present coming from drippings from locomotives and rail cars. However, Union Pacific has agreed to clean the site to industrial standards and State Parks will do further cleanup to bring the site to park standards.

This portion of the river next to Taylor Yard consists of relatively extensive riparian and freshwater habitat. A survey conducted by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1986 found a variety of native riparian species including willows, sycamores and cottonwoods. Also, many species of migrant birds utilize this section of riverbed. In fact, the Los Angeles Natural History Museum has catalogued over 200 bird species on this section of river. The stretch of river near Taylor Yard is also one of the few remaining stopovers in urban Los Angeles for migrating waterfowl on the Pacific Flyway .

More than a decade ago, residents from the neighborhoods and communities surrounding Taylor Yard began asking that Taylor Yard become a park, instead of an industrial site. Taylor Yard has more than two miles of riverfront under a variety of different owners.

Currently, there are more than 25 federal and state agencies, more than 30 cities, and more than 30 private organization involved in restoration and park projects along the Los Angeles River. The ultimate goal a Los Angeles River Parkway, a meandering string of parklands along the entire length of the river, all linked together in a greenbelt of natural and recreational lands. Many have called it the re-greening of the Los Angeles River.

#

Contacts for persons who are supportive of this acquisition and involved in the Los Angeles River parks and restoration efforts.

State Senator Gil Cedillo

Nadia Leal (916) 455-3456

Dan Farkas (213) 612-9566

State Assemblymember Jackie Goldberg

Bob Reid (916) 319-2045

George Magallanes (323) 258-0450

Los Angeles Mayor Jim Hahn

Angie Levine (213) 978-0741

Los Angeles City Councilman Ed Reyes

Tony Perez (213) 485-3451

Melanie Winter

The River Project

(818) 980-9660