

CHAPTER 13: EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION



Evaluation

In order to evaluate this Vision Plan, it is essential to understand both the intended purpose and the proposed audience for this document. This Vision Plan is intended to fulfill degree requirements for the Department of Landscape Architecture, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. This plan is also intended to meet the guidelines set by its client, The Trust for Public Land, following recommendations and funding from the California Coastal Conservancy in support of the Lower Ventura River Parkway Planning Project (see Appendix C). In terms of audience, it is the hope of the authors that this document may serve as a tool for citizens and governmental and non-governmental organizations who will be involved in the planning and execution of the Lower Ventura River Parkway.

This Vision Plan is conceptual. Detailed descriptions of the hydrological, ecosystemic, and cultural needs of the project area were studied and objectives were created in Part 2, Inventory and Analysis. An evaluation matrix (figure 13.2) is used to assess which objectives are met by the design solutions proposed in Chapters 7 thru 12.

HYDROLOGY

As an EPA listed impaired water body, multiple design solutions are needed to improve the hydrological function of the Ventura River. Hydrological function is dependent on adequate instream flow, tributary conditions, and the quality of surface and groundwater. Likewise, adjacent communities require protection of human infrastructure from flood damage, but in order to reap the benefits of healthy river function, this coexistence requires minimizing impairment to hydrological function.

ECOSYSTEMS

A multitude of environmentally enhancing, cost-efficient ecosystem services are potentially available to the people of Ventura. Harnessing these local benefits requires the restoration of diminished ecosystems. Restoring tributary connections and increasing the size and frequency of habitat patches can improve biodiversity opportunities and are keys to increasing the benefits of ecosystem services. Incorporating design solutions that minimize both habitat loss and the introduction of pollutants will also aid in protecting and

enhancing local ecosystems. In addition, the removal of invasive species, which colonize local habitats and usurp available resources, can help reduce these threats.

CULTURAL ELEMENTS

This Vision Plan's design solutions are also intended to create positive cultural impacts. Public access to the natural resources offered by the Ventura River is one of the first steps in reuniting Ventura's culture with the Ventura River. Identifying appropriate land uses and strategies for using the land adjacent to the Ventura River has broad-reaching design implications leading to increased physical and cultural protection of the river's important resources. Meeting objectives for both access and appropriate land use each provides potential to meet the further objectives of increasing cultural awareness through educational opportunities and promoting stewardship. Future generations will measure the success of these objectives by the degree to which the Ventura River Parkway presents a healthy river with thriving ecosystems that are acknowledged and embraced by the community and its culture.

FIGURE 13.1 *Kitesurfing as seen from Emma Woods State Beach.*

DESIGN SOLUTIONS	HYDROLOGY					ECOSYSTEMS				CULTURAL ELEMENTS			
	Preserve and expand space for natural function	Mitigate impact of hydrological structures on river function	Ensure adequate instream flow	Protect parkway structures and activities from flood damage	Improve the quality of surface water and ground water	Restore and enhance ecosystems	Enhance biodiversity by reducing harmful impacts	Increase habitat connectivity	Manage invasive species	Improve access and recreation at the river	Minimize incompatible land uses near the river	Increase cultural awareness of the river through education	Encourage stewardship over the river
Parkway Plan (continued)													
Use California native plantings for revegetation projects						✓	✓	✓	✓				
Gather seed from locally genetic sources						✓	✓	✓	✓				
Commence immediate collection of local seeds						✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Increase width of riparian corridor upstream of Shell Road	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Maintain natural, undeveloped characteristic of west bank of Ventura River	✓					✓	✓				✓		✓
Promote preservation of open space on Ventura hillsides			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓		
Increase passive recreational activities	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓					✓	✓
"Announce" the parkway at three or more entry points												✓	
Locate trails and visitor facilities to take advantage of scenic views										✓			
Appropriate signage and wayfinding features	✓	✓				✓	✓					✓	
Highlight existing historic sites within and around the parkway												✓	✓
Stewardship programs with focus on monitoring a changing river												✓	✓
Pursue educational tie-ins with neighborhood schools						✓		✓				✓	✓
Open space as first priority for future floodplain land uses	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		
Limited, river-friendly mixed-use development		✓									✓		
Preserve and expand river-friendly agricultural practices	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓					
"Sunset" industrial land uses in parkway corridor	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓					

FIGURE 13.2 Evaluation matrix.

DESIGN SOLUTIONS	HYDROLOGY					ECOSYSTEMS				CULTURAL ELEMENTS			
	Preserve and expand space for natural function	Mitigate impact of hydrological structures on river function	Ensure adequate instream flow	Protect parkway structures and activities from flood damage	Improve the quality of surface water and ground water	Restore and enhance ecosystems	Enhance biodiversity by reducing harmful impacts	Increase habitat connectivity	Improve the quality of surface water and ground water	Improve access and recreation at the river	Minimize incompatible land uses near the river	Increase cultural awareness of the river through education	Encourage stewardship over the river
Foster Park													
Increased access points to park		✓								✓		✓	✓
Swimming hole										✓		✓	✓
Iconic swimming flag												✓	✓
Tot lot										✓			
Sundeck										✓			
Increased picnic facilities										✓			
Cottonwood Junction													
Public access at Cottonwood Junction Canyon Walls Trail										✓		✓	✓
Ventura Wilds Trail										✓		✓	✓
Rope Bridge										✓		✓	✓
Canyon Walls Trail										✓		✓	✓
Ephemeral Trail										✓		✓	✓
Cottonwood Trail										✓		✓	✓
Plant community restoration on adjacent hills						✓	✓	✓	✓				
Canada Confluence													
Dechannelize Weldon Creek		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓					
Remove selected structures from 100-year floodplain and return land to the river	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			
Native Arboretum			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓					
Polishing Ponds			✓			✓							
Protect historical aqueduct remnant			✓					✓					
Restore Canada Larga tributary, including daylighting at Highway 33				✓			✓	✓					
Provide pedestrian access to Ventura River													
Clean up brownfield site		✓				✓	✓	✓		✓			
Ventura Avenue Night Market										✓			
Test, monitor, and remediate brownfields at former petrochemical facilities				✓	✓	✓				✓			
Constructed wetlands for diversion and treatment of Canada Larga water					✓	✓	✓						
Picnic and recreational amenities							✓			✓		✓	✓
Community gallery space										✓	✓	✓	✓

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Downtown													
Elevated freeway crossing										✓		✓	✓
Levee Trail						✓	✓			✓		✓	✓
Remove portion of levee		✓	✓			✓	✓					✓	✓
Restore previous estuary habitat			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓
Restore previous wetland habitat			✓	✓	✓		✓						✓
Relocate bike trail and portion of parking lot to restore dune habitat				✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓
Enhance coastal protection of built structures				✓	✓								
Protection of a valued surf spot				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓
Increase the potential for the reestablishment of the Ventura Marsh Milk Vetch					✓	✓	✓						✓
Replace asphalt in existing parking lots with permeable paving				✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
Incorporate runoff treatment swales				✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓
Vegetated shaded parking at Fairgrounds				✓	✓	✓	✓						✓
Remove large <i>Arundo donax</i> infestations at two downtown river locations				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
Storm drain outfall treatment sites		✓			✓	✓	✓						✓
Mixed-use developments as a bridge between downtown and the river		✓			✓	✓	✓						
Creation of park and open space northeast of Main Street			✓										
Ethnobotanical and historical garden		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Re-design of street grid										✓			
Improved pedestrian crossings										✓			
Mixed use development with density and urban infill	✓		✓							✓	✓		
Mixed use development with public and private outdoor spaces												✓	✓
Mixed use development utilizing Green building practices		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓
Mixed use development with homeless services and transitional housing				✓			✓						
Interpretative center with flood compatible structure and grounds	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Screen plantings for greater privacy at Group Camp										✓		✓	✓
Eliminate spur trails on Emma Wood property						✓	✓	✓					
Replace spur trails with elevated path along reconfigured railroad trestle	✓					✓	✓			✓		✓	✓



Conclusion

The Lower Ventura River is an essential resource for the people of Ventura and for the ecological health of the region. During the recent past, the river has experienced dramatic and far-reaching impacts that have separated Venturans from their river, have diminished hydrological, ecological, and cultural systems, and have threatened the inheritance of future generations. Without stewardship and policies to preserve and restore the river and the lands along the river, Venturans will face the potential of unrecoverable damage to what could be one of their community's most compelling natural features.

A Vision Plan for the Lower Ventura River Parkway seeks to end the current separation between the people of Ventura and their river. By providing concepts for education and recreational opportunities while promoting compatible behaviors that protect and restore river functions and ecological health, this Vision Plan seeks to maximize the potential benefits of a river parkway.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This Vision Plan represents an initial step in the realization of a parkway for the Lower Ventura River. Though the proposed parkway is only six miles long, the success of many of the proposed design solutions are dependent on employing improved practices at a much larger scale, the

scale of the Ventura River Watershed.

The following recommendations are intended to contribute to the successful implementation of this Vision Plan:

- Collect and share data.
Access to data facilitates research and problem-solving. It is recommended that data be centralized and made freely available to the public.
- Develop mechanisms for conservancies to acquire water rights.
Without mechanisms to ensure adequate instream flow, competing interests threaten the hydrological function of the river, the ecological health of the region, and create the possibility of expensive legal battles at a later date.
- Increase protections to tributaries and headwaters.
Headwaters and tributaries play a crucial role in river health. Impacts to these water bodies will impact river function.
- Employ sustainable practices throughout the watershed.
Urban, agricultural, and industrial runoff need to be better managed. Employing sustainable practices is the common responsibility of all.
- Collect and propagate local native seeds and plants.
Locally-evolved native plants best support local

ecosystems. Propagating local seeds and plants will strengthen local ecosystems.

- Pursue “Rule of Common Law” to ensure low impact public access to hillsides and the river.
Without access, the human relationship with the local environment is weakened. Foster public access and environmental conscientiousness to the local environment.
- Promote education and stewardship.
Education and stewardship benefit the community and aid in the protection of community resources.
- Plan for the future.
The burden of depleted lands and resources will fall to future generations. Identify and enact proactive measures to avert the residue of environmental damage and an unfair shifting of responsibility.
- Prepare for shifting consumer demand.
As knowledge increases and public opinion shifts, consumers will increasingly seek products that are sustainably created or harvested.

The Ventura River is a critical coastal watershed in southern California and enhancement of habitat, water quality and other natural resources in the watershed is essential to the restoration and enhancement of significant coastal resources in the state, including riparian and watershed resources.

California Coastal Conservancy. 2007.
Staff Recommendation, Lower Ventura River Parkway Planning Project