



February 5, 2018

*Via E-Mail*

To: Pasadena Mayor Tornek and City Council  
Re: **Arroyo Advisory Group Recommendations** (Item 10 on City Council Agenda for Feb 5, 2018)

Dear Mayor Tornek and City Council:

The West Pasadena Residents' Association (WPRA) represents over 7000 households with over 1000 paid members in neighborhoods adjoining the Arroyo Seco. The future character of the Arroyo is of paramount importance to our members, the City of Pasadena, and to the many other users who enjoy this iconic resource.

We strongly agree with Mayor Terry Tornek—there is a need to reexamine how the disparate activities in the Arroyo are managed and how governance of the Arroyo can be better unified. More importantly, much of the Arroyo has been neglected, especially in the sections that do not feature concentrated recreational activities. The Arroyo itself--and not just the embedded uses and users of the Arroyo—needs to be taken care of, treated better, with funding streams identified to do that. Before any new amenities are added, the restoration and maintenance of the natural areas must be given priority. As the mayor and the AAG have each noted, there are in excess of \$88 million in proposed projects that have not been undertaken or funded.

We concur in concept with AAG's initially selected project: a connected trail system that will allow easy and well-guided access to all three sections of Pasadena's reach of the Arroyo. Providing better trail access—then adding, where possible, coincident restoration, maintenance, and improvement of the adjoining Arroyo stream corridor itself-- would be a quite valuable start, setting up the possibility of longer term changes. We look forward to commenting on the specific details of the proposal as it emerges.

The WPRA is concerned, however, that proposals to further commercialize uses of the Arroyo are not appropriate and will detract further from, and interfere with, the values that have historically characterized the Arroyo. Any further commercial development of and structural intrusions to the Arroyo, including signage, should be subject to clear standards and careful review with adequate opportunity for community and wider public comment.

The AAG should advocate for potential funding sources to implement naturalization projects and should recommend that the City increase financial and staff resources to implement those priorities in the Arroyo. The Arroyo Seco is a natural stream course, much modified, but yet an extremely valuable ecological and recreational asset of the communities through which it winds on its way to the confluence with the Los Angeles River. Many previous studies and opinion surveys have focused on restoring, improving and maintaining the natural character of the Arroyo. We agree with the core conclusions of those studies, and believe that a cardinal priority of the AAG should be to identify longer term projects that will provide better structured and managed public access so that the native stream of the Arroyo Seco can be enjoyed by the public while restoring and maintaining the connected habitat for species that depend on its existence.

**WEST PASADENA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**  
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We believe that the AAG should endorse a city-county partnership to increase storm water recharge in the Arroyo Seco. As a natural stream, the Arroyo needs water to support recreation, habitat and esthetic values. Flowing water in the stream has dwindled, while Pasadena continues to use scarce drinking water to irrigate its golf courses and public areas. Retaining and recycling Pasadena's storm water runoff and waste water streams for aquifer recharge and use in irrigating landscape areas, sharing a portion of that new source of water to maintain and create habitat in the Arroyo Seco, should be a priority recommendation of the AAG. However, we understand that the City is in a dispute with the City of Los Angeles over the use of Pasadena's wastewater. The AAG should press Pasadena to favorably resolve this dispute at an early date to increase available water resources that could be shared by the Arroyo. Moreover, the recent decision by the County supervisors on the Devil's Gate Dam project included a recommendation that the City and County explore storm water capture from the dam reservoir for recharge in the existing spreading basins.

The AAG should endorse the City's involvement in a collaborative process which should generate both sediment removal and restarting the *Arroyo Seco Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study* to restore and enhance the Arroyo, but open up funding possibilities as well. The Los Angeles County Flood Control District (FCD) proposed sediment removal project, newly revised and improved by county supervisor action, included a commitment by the county to fund a restart of the stalled *Arroyo Seco Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study*, a partnership between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works, begin in 2005.

On a less positive note, the FCD plan would still unnecessarily destroy many of the recreational and natural values of an important area of the upper Arroyo. A less-destructive alternative sediment removal plan, twice approved by the City, was only partially adopted by the vote of the supervisors on the FCD plan. We urge the AAG and the City of Pasadena to continue to press FCD and the supervisors to support implementation of the Pasadena plan to reduce the significant community and ecological impacts of the sediment removal project.

Lastly, the AAG should establish fire safety as a priority recommendation. The dead and dying vegetation that has built up all along the Arroyo during our recent drought years is a clear and present fire hazard. The City has recently begun clearing away dead trees, brush and other debris, which we applaud. As one example, water to the Browning Ferris Industries stream diversion area was cut off, and much of the vegetation in that corridor has died and become tinder in the summer. This represents a real fire risk to our community. The City's work of selectively cutting dead trees and clearing brush while preserving habitat should be continued.

We appreciate the opportunity as a fully engaged voice of the community to comment on these important issues, and would like to discuss further our ideas with the AAG at a convenient time in the near future.

Sincerely,

*Kenyon Harbison*

Kenyon Harbison  
President, West Pasadena Residents' Association

## **Distribution:**

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### Other Organizations

Pasadena Audubon Society	<a href="http://www.pasadenaaudubon.org/">http://www.pasadenaaudubon.org/</a>
Arroyo Seco Foundation	<a href="http://www.arroyoseco.org/">http://www.arroyoseco.org/</a>
Arroyo Advisory Group	<a href="https://onearroyo.org/">https://onearroyo.org/</a>
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