Ecosystem Restoration

Ecosystem restoration in the Santa Ana Watershed is critical to improving natural resource habitat. Intense urbanization, agriculture and past flood control practices have severely restricted and reduced natural floodplains, interfered with sediment transport from the upper to the lower watershed, severed critical wildlife movement pathways, and caused the loss and/or degradation of aquatic, riparian woodland and floodplain habitat that support endangered and threatened species such as the least Bell’s vireo, southwestern willow flycatcher and the Santa Ana sucker. Ecosystem restoration in Prado Basin will provide opportunities to improve aquatic and riparian ecosystems by removing non-native vegetation and wildlife, improve hydrologic and hydraulic character by restoring the river gradient, and improve habitat for threatened and endangered species through the creation and management of edge successional habitat. The study will also evaluate opportunities for the creation of additional wetland ponds.

Increased Stormwater Capture at Prado

Costly and limited imported water availability from the State Water Project and Colorado River has heightened the need to enhance water supply by increasing local stormwater capture. The current agreement between the USACE and OCWD allows for the capture of stormwater up to elevation 498 feet above mean sea level (amsl) during flood season, and up to elevation 505 feet amsl during non-flood season behind Prado Dam. Increasing stormwater capture at Prado by an additional 7 feet during the flood season, to 505 feet amsl year round, can provide up to an additional 30,000 acre-feet of water annually (AFY), enough water for nearly 250,000 people. Efficient use of Prado Dam resources will reduce regional dependence on the fragile Bay-Delta and the oversubscribed Colorado River. Increasing the amount of water captured at Prado can be implemented without any infrastructure construction or modifications. The water supply benefit from the study will help address the regional impacts of climate change, natural disasters and persistent drought.

Sediment Removal

The Feasibility Study also evaluates sediment management at Prado as a measure to achieve both ecosystem restoration and water conservation benefits. Since Prado Dam was completed in 1941, sediment has accumulated at an average rate of 700 AFY. This accumulated sediment has negatively impacted water storage and threatens critical habitat of endangered species, upsets ecosystem values, and reduces the supply of sand to replenish beaches. Several social and environmental benefits would result from restoring sediment flow from the Prado Basin to the lower reach of the Santa Ana River. Reduced accumulation of sediment behind Prado Dam will increase the water storage capacity within the basin for water conservation efforts. It will also extend the useful life of Prado Dam as a flood control structure. Restoring sediment transport through Prado Basin will enhance the environment above and below Prado Dam. For example, downstream of the dam, erosion of the riverbed threatens riparian habitat and restoring natural sediment flows will help protect riparian habitat. Spawning habitat for the endangered Santa Ana Sucker may also be enhanced by restoring natural substrate conditions.

The Feasibility Study is exploring opportunities for ecosystem restoration, additional stormwater capture and sediment removal behind Prado Dam in Riverside, California usinga comprehensive watershed approach. In 2014, the Orange County Water District (OCWD) committed to funding the cost of the Study, which is $______. OCWD is dedicated to working with the United States Army Corps of Engineers to develop solutions for these issues.

**Timeline**

- **Scoping**
- **Alternatives Formulation & Analysis**
- **Feasibility Level Analysis**
- **Agency Decision Milestone**
- **Civil Works Review Board**
- **Tentatively Selected Plan Milestone**
- **Chief’s Report**

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Ecosystem Restoration

Stormwater Capture

Sediment Management

Prado Basin Feasibility Study impacts the following Congressional Districts:

- Linda Sanchez [D-38]
- Ed Royce [R-39]
- Ken Calvert [R-42]
- Mimi Walters [R-45]
- Loretta Sanchez [D-46]
- Alan Lowenthal [D-47]
- Dana Rohrabacher [R-48]
- Darrell Issa [R-49]