

# SENATOR RICARDO LARA

## LEGISLATIVE FACT SHEET

### SB 355 (Rivers and Mountains Conservancy Board)

#### **Summary:**

SB 355 makes changes to the composition of the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy Board to ensure that a local perspective is included in the decision-making process. This bill requires one voting member of the board to be a resident from a city that borders the Lower Los Angeles River. Additionally the bill will include representatives from both the California State Senate and California State Assembly on the board.

#### **Background:**

The San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) was created through Statute in 1999. The mission of the RMC is to preserve open space and habitat in order to provide for low-impact recreation and educational uses, wildlife habitat restoration and protection, and watershed improvements within the boundaries of the Conservancy. The territory of the RMC includes the watersheds for the San Gabriel River and the lower Los Angeles River, along with portions of the Santa Clara River and the lower Santa Ana River.

The Board of the RMC is established in statute and includes 13 voting members and 7 non-voting members.

The 13 voting members are:

A member of the LA County Board of Supervisors,  
Two representatives from the San Gabriel Valley Council Of Governments,  
Two representatives from the Gateway Cities Council Of Governments,  
Two members of the Orange County Division of the League of California Cities,  
A representative of the San Gabriel Valley Water Association,  
A representative of the Central Basin Water Association,  
A resident of Los Angeles County,  
The Secretary of the Resources Agency,  
The Secretary for Environmental Protection,  
The Director of Finance.

The non-voting members are representatives from:  
United States Army Corps of Engineers,

United States Forest Service,  
Los Angeles County Department of Public Works,  
Orange County Public Works Department,  
San Gabriel River Watermaster,  
Department of Parks and Recreation,  
Wildlife Conservation Board.

#### **Issue:**

The recently approved state water bond provides millions of dollars in funding opportunities for the revitalization of the Lower Los Angeles River watershed, including parks and open space along the river. Many of those funds, including a \$30m direct allocation for watershed improvements, and a share of \$100m for urban creek restoration, will be allocated through the RMC. Opportunities for improvements to the Lower LA River directly impact the communities that border the river. It is vital that the conservancy board include representation from the cities that border the river, to provide a local perspective on plans and developments.

Adding state elected officials as non-voting board members in an advisory capacity has proven successful at other state conservancies. The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy includes two non-voting members - a Senator and an Assembly Member representing districts that include a portion of the Delta. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy includes three Senators and three Assembly Members, appointed by the Senate Rules Committee and the Speaker of the Assembly.

#### **Solution:**

SB 355 increases the number of non-voting members on the RMC board to 9, adding a Senator appointed by the Senate Rules Committee and an Assembly Member appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly. The bill also replaces one member of the Orange County Division of the League of California Cities with a resident from a city that borders the Lower Los Angeles River.

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