



FRIENDS OF THE LA RIVER

LA River Ecological Restoration Principles

In partnership with several organizations throughout the County, Friends of the Los Angeles River has worked for decades to improve and protect the unique ecological resources of the LA River. Through our 2016 Long Beach Fish Study, partnership on the Wetland Restoration Principles, and work with LACFCD and Heal the Bay to protect the Lower LA River estuary, we have demonstrated and enhanced the River's thriving urban ecology. FoLAR's focus has always believed in the mutually supportive intersection between ecology and public access. Even though it is heavily concretized through the Gateway Communities, the River's habitat provides immense ecosystem services to the surrounding communities. Bolstering, protecting and expanding upon these attributes should be central to any River Revitalization Plan.

The following is a set of ecological restoration principles that Friends of the Los Angeles River has developed based on years of work and collaboration. They are meant as basic guidelines for restoration or habitat enhancement efforts along the LA River to identify, protect, and improve critical ecological functions that are necessary to public health and quality of life of communities throughout the watershed.

River restoration or habitat enhancement plans and projects should:

1. Bring back the biological processes and ecological function critical to the health of the river, using broadly accepted scientific evidence of historic, present, and potential conditions to set ambitious and achievable restoration goals and quantifiable measures of success. Plans/projects should identify any data gaps necessary before developing appropriate measures of success and implementing projects.
2. Have clear ecological goals, based on critical scientific evaluation of all feasible alternatives that help drive project planning processes. These goals should be prioritized along with social and economic priorities (such as public access and community investment) to maximize ecological, social and economic benefits and ensure the equitable distribution of those benefits.
3. Aim for and achieve outcomes that balance historical ecology with existing urban ecology, taking into account the current constraints and adjacent land uses, and maximizing the most valuable long-term benefits to the ecological health of the river.

4. Outline goals and quantify the important ecosystem services the river can provide for water quality, water supply, biodiversity, public health, and flood risk management and consider how the watershed hydrology may impact those ecological functions.
5. Consider concrete removal – to the extent possible, taking into consideration adjacent land uses and flood risk management – to allow for optimal enhancement of River ecology and wildlife habitat.
6. Involve robust community engagement and community/science-based monitoring to establish baseline environmental characteristics and track site response to the restoration activities. This ongoing monitoring should include stewardship-building programming through cultural, educational, and recreational programs where appropriate.
7. Consider climate change projections and be designed to promote ecological and social climate resilience, taking into account short and long-term changes to climate including but not limited to: precipitation patterns, watershed hydrology, seasonal temperatures, and sea level rise.
8. Consider public facilities that provide stewardship-building opportunities through cultural, educational and recreational programming where appropriate. These public facilities should be sited and designed to avoid and minimize impacts to the ecological health and biological function of the river utilize the use of natural materials to the greatest extent possible.
9. Provide a robust, transparent, equitable, accessible, and culturally relevant community/stakeholder participation process that includes educational programming, leverages local knowledge, and integrates over-arching nature-based watershed goals into community benefits.

References

1. Principles herein are derived from our collaborative partnerships with the Los Angeles County Flood Control District, Heal the Bay, Surfrider Foundation, Friends of the Ballona Wetlands, and LA Waterkeeper
2. https://folar.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/FOLAR_Fish_Study_2016.pdf
3. https://folar.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Wetland_Restoration_Principles.pdf
4. <https://folar.org/2016/02/18/folar-works-with-rwqcb-and-others-to-stop-bulldozing-in-the-lower-river/>