MIXER & POSTER SESSION

4:50 PM - 6:55 PM
Posters that highlight the multiple approaches for creating and sustaining change in our communities in terms of watershed health. Posters that highlight long-term policy solutions, planning efforts, incentive programs, sustained education and engagement efforts encouraged.
The Greater Los Angeles Water Collaborative: Los Angeles Stormcatcher Initiative and Scaling Analysis
Daniel Berger, Deborah Weinstein - Tree People

The Greater LA Water Collaborative is an innovative partnership between the LA County Flood Control District, City of LA’s Bureau of Sanitation and LA Department of Water and Power. The Collaborative is facilitated by the nonprofit environmental organization TreePeople with support from the engineering firm Tetra Tech.

In response to severe and increasing climate pressures impacting the region, amplified by the ongoing drought, these key water-related agencies have joined together to forge collaborative solutions. Greater collaboration will result in synergies and efficiencies, saving taxpayer money while building climate resilience through coordinated, multi-benefit projects.

The Collaborative launched the LA StormCatcher Initiative, a pilot project to showcase how community members can contribute to climate resilience by capturing rainwater at home.

LA StormCatcher retrofitted a half-dozen residential parcels with rainwater catchment systems built for the 21st century and studied the results to learn the full potential of residential rainwater capture in the region. The pilot parcels feature large cisterns equipped with cloud-based monitoring and control technology that adjusts system performance in real time based on forecast rainfall – releasing or retaining water to optimize benefits to water supply, water quality and flood prevention.

Rainwater captured in cisterns can be used outside for watering plants or washing vehicles, or inside for flushing toilets or washing laundry -- reducing demand for potable water. Captured rainwater can also be infiltrated through rain gardens to the region’s aquifers. And more captured rainwater means less polluted runoff. Cisterns also increase water security, providing an alternate supply in case of emergency.

Based on the pilot findings, LA StormCatcher used 3-D radar data to perform a groundbreaking high-resolution analysis of all 1.5 million single-family residential parcels in the region to learn exactly where cisterns and rain gardens can be placed, and to determine the potential benefits to water supply, water quality and flood prevention:

- 1.2 million of the 1.5 million single-family residential parcels in LA County are now suitable for rainwater capture systems.
- These 1.2 million rooftops represent 17% of impervious area in the County and a proportionate amount of rainwater lost to runoff.

Capturing rainfall from these 1.2 million rooftops could:
- Provide 30 billion gallons of water per year -- 10% of the County’s current residential demand.
- Reduce polluted runoff by 15%, helping to clean our rivers and ocean.
- Provide each home with nearly a whole year of emergency water supply for a person on average.
- Reduce nuisance flooding an average 55% per parcel.

LA StormCatcher provided a proving ground for cooperative execution of multi-benefit projects by the Greater LA Water Collaborative and laid the groundwork for widespread deployment of residential rainwater capture in the LA region, demonstrating the power of partnership among agencies and Angelenos to achieve water security and climate resilience.
Planning for Social Equity & Environmental Health
Sally Garcia, Sarah Rascon, and Brian Baldauf - Mountain Recreation and Conservation Authority

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) would like to submit a poster for the 2018 State of the Watershed Symposium that describes new strategies of planning related to open space efforts along the Los Angeles River. River project planning at the MRCA has shifted from relatively straightforward science-based efforts in order to increase parks, open space, native habitat, and best practices for stormwater management, toward design approaches that consider broader effects on watershed resources and people through an additional lens of social equity. The need to broadly consider a project’s social effects on communities is based on much shared institutional knowledge and the expertise of local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working toward equitable communities. Park projects are most successful when an entire community is fostered to thrive, with watershed health as one of many considerations. As the River deservedly gains more attention, the need for community partners to work together to address public safety, education, resource improvement, and economic issues has become more urgent.

MRCA has facilitated three processes recently to discuss larger issues of equity, environmental justice, public safety, housing, displacement, homelessness, and River education, and how those issues intertwine with parks and open space. These three processes will be highlighted on the poster to illustrate how new integrated approaches can advance the health and sustainability of our region’s watersheds, rivers, streams, and habitat.

1) In the fall of 2017, MRCA, collaborating with the Los Angeles Regional Open Space Affordable Housing Collaborative (LA ROSAH), hosted Building Equitable Communities: A Housing & Parks Summit. The summit invited city officials, stakeholders, and local NGOs to discuss how to build equitable communities in Greater Los Angeles and share policy and planning solutions to mitigate the possible displacement impacts of parks and green infrastructure.

2) In August 2018, a Homelessness and Open Space regional forum will be convened to discuss the impacts of homelessness on parkland, and identify tools to protect natural spaces while providing resources for a regional homeless population in need of more investment and opportunities. The poster will illustrate some of the lessons learned and feedback provided during the forums in how river planning projects can touch people’s lives and make positive impacts in ways that provide equitable environmental justice.

3) The first phase of the development of a Los Angeles River Ranger program was completed in 2018. The inclusive stakeholder engagement process brought government agencies, NGOs, and local communities together to provide recommendations on how best to uniformly provide access, safety and maintenance measures, ranger presence, and interpretive services along the full length of the Los Angeles River. The development of a River Ranger Plan, and a later pilot program, will help to catalyze long-term multi-jurisdictional collaboration and coordination of river and watershed programs. This is yet another example of how MRCA is considering wider social issues and community needs in an effort to achieve more equity on the River, as well as better management of the River’s resources.
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