

EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT
August 12, 2005

ITEM: 17

SUBJECT: **PROTECTION OF LIFE AND PROPERTY FROM FLOODING ALONG THE SAN DIEGO RIVER**

The Executive Officer will provide an informational report on a variety of approaches used in Southern California and elsewhere to minimize public and private losses due to flooding. The Board may take an action. (*Deborah Jayne*)

PURPOSE: The purpose of this item is to provide an opportunity for the Governing Board to initiate dialog on this important issue. No formal board action is required (although the Board may provide direction to the Executive Officer if it so chooses).

DISCUSSION: Consistent with the Conservancy's overall statutory mandate to protect, preserve, and restore the San Diego River Area, our enabling statute¹ specifies that the San Diego River Conservancy was created "for the following purposes: (a) To acquire and manage public lands within the San Diego River Area, and to provide recreational opportunities, open space, wildlife habitat and species restoration and protection, wetland protection and restoration, and protection and maintenance of the quality of the waters in the San Diego River for all beneficial uses, lands for educational uses within the area, and *natural floodwater conveyance*. (b) To provide for the public's enjoyment, and to enhance the recreational and educational experience on public lands in the territory in a manner consistent with the protection of land and natural resources, as well as economic resources, in the area."

During my first year as your Executive Officer, it has become clear to me that the chronic flooding problem in the lower reaches of the San Diego River is an important issue that I believe the Conservancy must address if we are to achieve our statutory mission. I am increasingly convinced of this in light of the numerous proposed development plans, Community Plan amendments, and General Plan Updates of which I have recently become aware. Because many of the proposed projects involve development in the floodway or floodplain of the San Diego River, each project will intensify an already

serious flooding problem. Based on the Environmental Impact Reports I have reviewed to date, it is clear that the “cumulative impacts to hydrology and water quality” to which each of these projects will contribute are not being adequately evaluated, especially in the context of all existing and future proposed development (build-out).

The ongoing problem of flooding in the San Diego River, with all of its many social, economic, political, and ecological implications, is a complex and somewhat daunting undertaking. If the Governing Board concurs that this is an important issue with which the Conservancy should grapple, I propose that we do so over the course of several meetings. My intent today is simply to introduce the concept and provide the opportunity for Board members to initiate dialog.

My research on this multi-faceted topic is in the early stages. Accordingly, the accompanying Staff Report (to be distributed at meeting) is a very incomplete rough draft that serves primarily to outline some of the important considerations and begins to frame the issues. With your concurrence, I will ultimately provide you with a complete Report which distills the problems and issues to their essence and presents potential alternatives and recommendations for your consideration.

LEGAL CONCERNS: None.

FISCAL IMPACT: None.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: *Staff Report (to be distributed at meeting)*

1. Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board, Resolution 2005-002, Adopted January 27, 2005
2. Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board, Notice of Public Workshop, September 9, 2004
3. San Diego River Park Conceptual Plan, Appendix G, “Preserving Floodplains as Open Space Amenities”.
4. Newhall Ranch Development Report, April 2004
5. Excerpts from Navajo Community Plan – related to flooding
6. Excerpts from General Plan 2020, County of San Diego

RECOMMENDATION: Accept the draft Staff Report.

¹ California Public Resources Code Division 22.9, Section 32630 – 32661.