

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

June 10, 2005

a) **Executive Officer Activities**

b) **Fashion Valley Road Failure and Repair**

As you know, on December 30, 2004, the low flow culvert river crossing on Fashion Valley Road failed due to major storms. To date, that crossing has not been repaired or replaced. The San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board recently issued a Cleanup and Abatement Order to the City of San Diego for the discharge of waste to the San Diego River resulting from the culvert crossing failure.

Consistent with the Conservancy's mission to protect and restore the San Diego River, I recommend replacing the failed culvert crossing¹ with a span bridge over the river. I have been assured (informally) by Dr. Howard Chang² that a span bridge is technically feasible at the Fashion Valley Road location. The span bridge is superior to a culvert because it will (1) significantly restore more of the natural river morphology and hydrology; (2) allow the unobstructed passage of aquatic and terrestrial animals (i.e., provide a wildlife corridor); (3) provide a significant improvement to the water quality of the River (by removing road and vehicles from the River); and (4) will be an important functional and aesthetic improvement to the San Diego River Park.

Furthermore, the span bridge will also significantly improve traffic conditions and public safety. When low flow culverts were put in place many years ago the number of people living and working in Mission Valley was significantly less than it is today. With the addition of hundreds of condo units, the culvert crossings are no longer adequately sized to accommodate the huge increase in traffic³. In my opinion, the traffic and public safety issues alone should be sufficient to trigger a replacement of the culvert with a bridge at Fashion Valley Road and throughout Mission Valley.

The floods of 1980 resulted in a measured flow of 20,000 cubic feet per second at the Fashion Valley Road crossing. It is anticipated that similar storms today would generate a significantly greater volume and velocity of runoff due to the significant increase in contributing impervious surfaces and human population. Unfortunately population estimates for 1980 and 2005 are not currently available, but SANDAG census data indicates that the resident population in Mission Valley in 1990 was 7,493. The resident population estimate in the 2000 census was 12,027 and the total

¹ The Fashion Valley Road culvert crossing consisted of six corrugated metal pipes with a road on top that was designed to flood in storm events.

² Dr. Howard Chang is a retired SDSU Professor of Engineering, nationally renowned hydrologist and expert on the San Diego River.

³ Per the City of San Diego's traffic estimates, approximately 13,000 vehicular trips (including 500 bus trips) occur daily at the Fashion Valley Road river crossing.

resident population is predicted to grow to 17,959 by 2010.⁴ The population change from 1990 to 2010 represents a nearly 2.5 fold increase. These estimates do not include the total number of people now working and commuting to Mission Valley. Common sense would dictate that a population increase of this magnitude should demand a commensurate upgrade in river crossing capacity.

On behalf of the Conservancy, I addressed the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board at its meeting on June 8, 2005⁵. My purpose was to encourage the Regional Board to take whatever action it felt most appropriate⁶ and to condition that action with the requirement that the Fashion Valley Road culvert be replaced with a span bridge or other mechanism that will “prevent” a future waste discharge into the San Diego River. I further recommended to the Regional Board that it encourage the City to replace **ALL** of the existing low-flow culvert crossings in Mission Valley with span bridges. The underlying goal of my message was to encourage the Regional Board to insist on a “long-term, permanent” solution to the problem, rather than just another quick fix (that is certain to fail again in time).

As an interim measure, it is my understanding that there are a variety of workable “temporary bridge” designs that could immediately restore traffic flow and provide the City with the time needed to design and build a permanent solution. A thorough Hydrology Assessment must also be included in the pre-design phases. Finally, I made a commitment to the Regional Board that the Conservancy will assist the City in securing the substantial funds needed to gradually replace the culverts with bridges throughout Mission Valley. Because bridges restore morphology, state and federal “River Restoration” as well as “Homeland Security” funds may be available for the project.

c) **FY 05/06 Budget- Status Report**

The Conservancy’s proposed baseline Support Budget increase to \$274,000 for FY 05/06 is currently included in the Budget Bills for FY 2005-2006 (AB 90 and SB 52). It is not uncommon for state agencies to receive an incremental adjustment in their baseline support budget. The Budget Committee in both houses has accepted this baseline adjustment request.

Pursuant to our Capital Outlay Finance Letter submitted to the Legislature from the Department of Finance, line-item 3845-301-0140 has been added to the Budget Bills to provide the San Diego River Conservancy with \$500,000 in reimbursement authority. The reimbursement authority is necessary to allow the Conservancy to spend grants that are received. And although the Conservancy does not *currently* have Capital Outlay Funds, the establishment of this line-item will allow the Conservancy to receive *future* Capital Outlay funds.

⁴ SANDAG/SourcePoint. Regional Census Data Center. “1990 Census of Population” and “Final 2030 Cities/County Forecast”, SANDAG, December 2003.

⁵ The Regional Board was considering the issuance of a Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification for the aquadam needed to replace the culvert.

⁶ Section 401 certification;; individual Waste Discharge Requirements; Cleanup and Abatement Order

d) **FY 06/07 Budget- Early Planning** - deferred

e) **Website Upgrade / New Domain**

Our website is currently administered at no charge to us by the Resources Agency's California Environmental Resources Evaluation System (CERES). I have talked with Mr. David Harris, our webmaster, on multiple occasions about the need for setting up a formal arrangement by which he is paid for his services. To date he has indicated that a formal agreement and compensation are unnecessary at this time. Up until now, our website, at <http://resources.ca.gov/sdrc.html>, has contained limited information and primarily serves to provide official public notice of Board meetings and to provide the Agenda and Agenda Briefing Packet for public review.

Over time, I have been working with Mr. Harris to enhance the Conservancy's website and to get our own domain name. Our new website will be found at www.sdrc.ca.gov. (Internet users who go to the old website will be automatically forwarded to the new domain.) In addition to links to meeting agendas and agenda briefing packets, the website will contain much more useful information, including basic information about Board members (name, appointment category), contact information for Conservancy staff, Board Meeting schedule, directions to Board Meetings, pictures of the San Diego River, links to important articles on the San Diego River and links to our partners' websites. Our upgrade is coming soon. I will let you know when the new website goes live!

f) **Helix Water District Tour of Cedar Creek Falls**

On Saturday, April 9th, the Helix Water District Board of Directors and staff hosted the San Diego River Conservancy Board and staff on an exceptional tour and trip up to Cedar Creek Falls. Helix Water District is our partner and a major landowner along the River. Memorable sites along the way included: El Capitan Reservoir, the diverting dam, Mildred Falls, Cedar Creek Falls and all the beautiful spring wildflowers. Cedar Creek Falls was breathtaking, with its intense velocity and sparkling water. We all learned quite a bit about the Helix Water District's operations and it was an outstanding opportunity for the Conservancy to learn more about the San Diego River and its history. **Supporting Document 4** was sent from Chairman Murphy to Mark Weston, General Manager of the Helix Water District thanking him for organizing this wonderful event. I am happy to provide copies of the event photos for Board Members would like to receive them.

g) **Earth Day (Sunday, May 1, 2005)**

The San Diego River Conservancy participated in the "Love Our Earth" EarthFair 2005 in Balboa Park on Sunday, May 1, 2005. The booth we shared with the San Diego River Park Foundation was located in the "e-community", which covered the northeast corner of the huge parking lot in Pan American Plaza, off Presidents Way. The "e-community" area housed a variety of conservation and resource management exhibitors. Fair organizers estimated that around 60,000 people attended the event. We passed out approximately 500 beach balls and 300 visors with the San Diego

River Conservancy logo and website and got dozens of people to sign up on our “interested parties” list. Susan Huntington, your Executive Assistant, created our first agency brochure for this event which briefly explains the purpose and mission of the agency. This was a great event to increase public awareness of the San Diego River Conservancy.

h) **San Diego River Day, RiverFest 2005 (Saturday, May 21, 2005)**

The San Diego River Conservancy helped sponsor the annual San Diego River Day, RiverFest 2005. By contributing \$2500 to the San Diego River Park Foundation, the San Diego River Conservancy was able to get its name and logo printed on the event t-shirts, program, and posters. Over fifty organizations of the San Diego River Coalition participated in the event, which included over thirty events scheduled along the river, from the estuary to Lake Cuyamaca. The Conservancy had a booth at the Mission Valley Library Neighborhood Festival where we passed out Conservancy beach balls, visors and brochures.

i) **San Diego River Watershed Management Plan, Final Draft**

The representatives from the County of San Diego were unable to attend today’s meeting to present an update to the Board on San Diego County’s “San Diego River Watershed Management Plan”. Due to a lack of time, this item was deferred from the April 8, 2005 meeting. They are tentatively on the agenda for the October 12, 2005 meeting.

j) **San Diego Legislative Delegation**

In the April 8, 2005 Meeting Briefing Binder, I provided the Board Members with maps and contact information for elected officials whose districts contain portions of the San Diego River. Regretfully, Council District 3 was not included at that time. (Obviously Board Member Atkins is an advocate for the San Diego River!) Also, both US Senators have local offices for issues relating to San Diego County.

Councilmember Toni Atkins

City Council District 3 (map attached as **Supporting Document 5**)
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k) **SDRC Signage For The Building**

As I reported in my February 11, 2005 Executive Officer's Report, I have been working with Art Coe, Assistant Executive Officer for the Regional Water Quality Control Board to add outdoor signage for the SDRC to the front of the building. The Regional Water Quality Control Board has taken the lead on this project and does not anticipate procuring the new signage this fiscal year. The plan is to replace existing signage with a sign that includes the names of each of the four state agencies currently in the building: Regional Water Quality Control Board, Department of Motor Vehicles, Department of Toxic Substance Control, and the San Diego River Conservancy. The four agencies will split the costs of for creation and installation of the sign. I will continue to work with Mr. Coe on this project in the upcoming fiscal year.

SUPPORTING
DOCUMENTS:

1. Letter from Assemblymember Saldana to San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board re: Fashion Valley Road Crossing
2. Letter from Assemblymember. Saldana re: meeting with Deborah Jayne
3. "Sinkhole Fix? Just Wait". The San Diego Union Tribune. April 20, 2005.
4. Letter to Helix Water District from Chairman Murphy re: Thank You letter for tour
5. Map of City Council District 3
6. Article from Board Member Minan: "Throwing the Baby Out With the Bathwater"