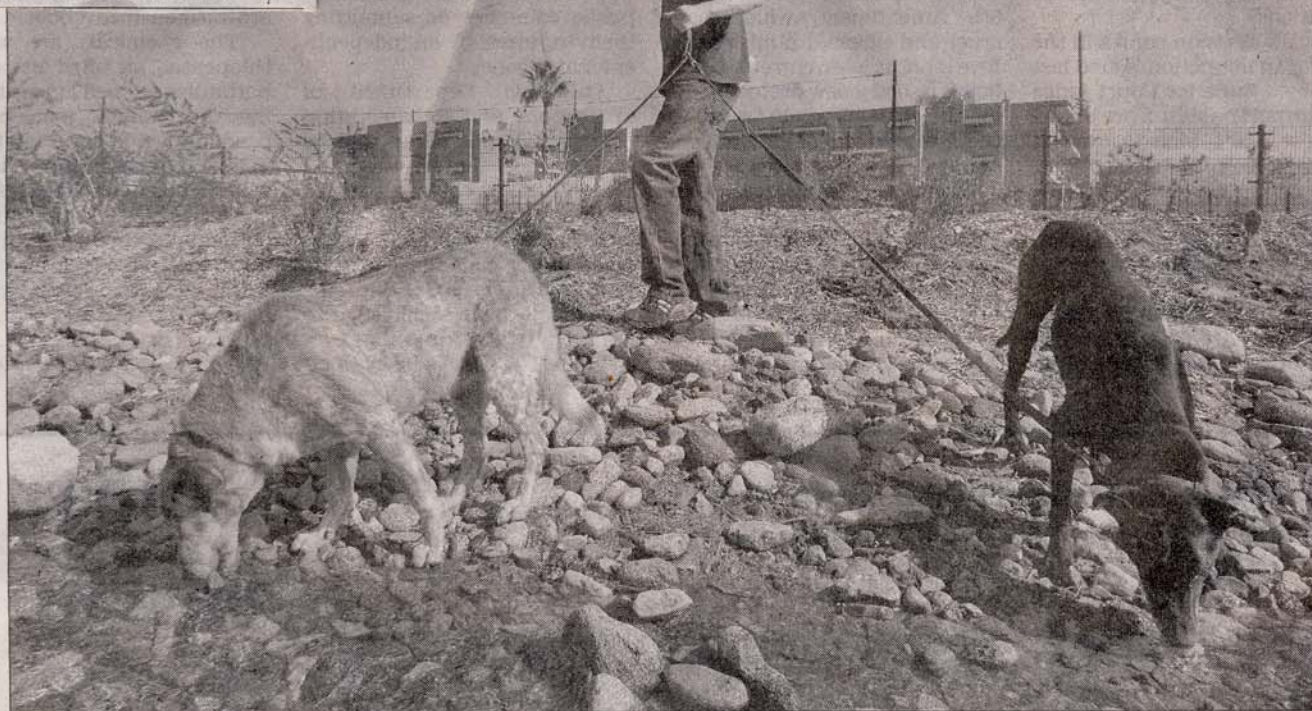


'This project is a template for the rest of the Los Angeles River. It serves not only as an environmental enhancement for the area, but as a demonstration for all flood channels.'

Zev Yaroslavsky, L.A. County supervisor

LOS ANGELES TIMES

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2007 **B3**



BARBARA DAVIDSON *Los Angeles Times*

REFRESHING: David Knell of Valley Glen and his dogs enjoy a stroll along a revitalized portion of the Tujunga Wash in the San Fernando Valley. A just-completed project created a new stream to save water, and added new paths and plantings.

Tujunga Wash project creates more recreation space while saving water

By FRANCISCO VARA-ORTA
Times Staff Writer

A \$7-million partial revitalization of the Tujunga Wash helps conserve water and provides new recreational space in the San Fernando Valley, Los Angeles officials said Wednesday.

The effort, known as the Tujunga Wash Greenway and Stream Restoration Project, diverts some of the water currently flowing into a flood control channel and sends it to an adjacent 1½-mile stream that runs alongside the wash in Valley Glen.

The arrangement allows more water to seep into an aquifer called the San Fernando Valley Groundwater Basin, rather than flow to the Los Angeles River and eventually the Pacific Ocean, said Vik Bapna, watershed manager for the county's Department of Public Works.

During a year with average rainfall, as much as 325,000 gallons a day will flow through the wash's new stream, which can mean enough drinking water for 760 families of four during 12 months, Bapna said. Currently, about 85% of the water used by Valley residents is imported, he said.

In addition to the new stream, the project features walking and biking paths — adorned

with native trees and plants — meandering along the wash that stretches from Vanowen Street to Oxnard Street.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, who attended a dedication of the project Wednesday, said it could serve as a model for conserving water and beautifying other flood control channels throughout the county.

"This project is a template for the rest of the Los Angeles River," Yaroslavsky said. "It serves not only as an environmental enhancement for the area, but as a demonstration for all flood channels from Compton to the San Gabriel Valley to West Los Angeles."

The Tujunga Wash, a nine-mile flood control channel built in the early 1950s, funnels rainwater between Hansen Dam and Studio City where it connects to the Los Angeles River.

Officials said funding for the project, which took a little over a year to complete, included state and county government sources. The finished product will be maintained by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, a joint powers authority that includes the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District and the Conejo Recreation and Park District.

The county is studying the possibility of extending the Tujunga Wash project north of Vanowen Street to Sherman Way, said Paul Edelman, deputy director of natural resources and planning for the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.

From the corner of Vanowen Street and Fulton Avenue where the project begins, one can see the stark contrast between the old and the revamped wash.

On the side where the project is completed, doves early Wednesday hopped in the new stream, which percolated soothingly. Bright green fencing lined the flood channel, cyclists rode down a paved path, and sage and cottonwoods dotted the landscape.

Across the street on the unredeveloped side, a rusted, bent fence kept people out and the terrain lining the channel was barren dirt.

Edelman said water had run through the new stream for about two weeks while officials prepared to unveil the site. During that period, and even with this year's dry conditions, some portions of the stream measured as deep as 6 inches, he said.

"Some fish and amphibians could live in the stream," Edelman said. "You can already see the life coming back here."

francisco.varaorta@latimes.com