

Assembly Bill No. 1558

CHAPTER 452

An act relating to rivers.

[Approved by Governor October 3, 2017. Filed with
Secretary of State October 3, 2017.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1558, Cristina Garcia. Los Angeles River: river ranger program.

Existing law establishes the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (the conservancies) and prescribes the membership and functions and duties of the conservancies with regard to the protection, preservation, and development of certain lands along the San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers and surrounding areas.

This bill would require the conservancies to collaborate with the Department of Parks and Recreation, the California Conservation Corps, and the State Lands Commission to develop a river ranger program to provide a network of river rangers who assist the public at sites along the Los Angeles River and its tributaries, as prescribed. The bill would require the conservancies, no later than June 30, 2018, to develop a plan for the design and implementation of the program, containing specified components and information, and to provide a copy of the completed plan to certain legislative committees by that date.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares as follows:

(a) Since the 1940s, the County of Los Angeles has managed the Los Angeles River as a concrete flood channel. The communities through which the river passes have had limited contact with or responsibility for the river.

(b) In the last several decades, the Los Angeles River has received greater public attention and support for its restoration and availability as an environmental and recreational resource for the communities through which the river passes, and Congress recently approved a restoration plan for an 11-mile segment of the river near Dodger Stadium in the City of Los Angeles. The Legislature has appropriated funds to pay some of the costs of the Los Angeles River restoration, including an amount of one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000), which has been authorized under a recently enacted bond measure to benefit the river.

(c) Some communities have parks along the Los Angeles River, and bicyclists traverse the bike paths on the river's levees every day. The City

of South Gate has shifted its policy to direct community attention to the benefits of the Los Angeles River.

(d) The Lower Los Angeles River Working Group is currently developing a plan for revitalizing the river downstream from the City of Los Angeles, and is considering ways to encourage communities to engage with the river and make the river a welcoming place for the communities through which it passes. The working group has also considered the possibility of placing “river rangers,” similar to National Park Service Rangers, to increase public safety and provide resource interpretation services for visitors to the river.

SEC. 2. (a) For purposes of this section, “conservancies” means the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.

(b) The conservancies shall collaborate with the Department of Parks and Recreation, the California Conservation Corps, and the State Lands Commission to develop a river ranger program to provide a network of river rangers who provide assistance to the public at sites along the Los Angeles River and its tributaries. The conservancies shall solicit the participation of representatives of local governments that have jurisdiction over segments of the river, including the City of Los Angeles and the County of Los Angeles. The conservancies, in cooperation with the Lower Los Angeles River Working Group, no later than June 30, 2018, shall prepare a plan for the design and implementation of the program, including recommendations regarding ways to finance the establishment and ongoing implementation of the program, and shall ensure that the plan is developed to accomplish all of the following objectives:

(1) Establish an identity for the Los Angeles River as a place for its communities to enjoy recreational opportunities and learn about the river’s history and environmental resources.

(2) Improve public safety for visitors to the Los Angeles River.

(3) Foster collaboration among state and local government entities and other public agencies with jurisdiction over the Los Angeles River, and coordinate the work of these entities and public agencies with regard to the development, maintenance, and enhancement of the river and its resources.

(4) Protect the parks, open space, and other public places adjacent to the Los Angeles River.

(5) Engage communities along the Los Angeles River in the protection and preservation of the Los Angeles River and its resources.

(6) Promote equal access and equity among all communities along the Los Angeles River with regard to the development and placement of improvements along the river.

(7) Monitor the physical conditions, environmental health, and development of green space along the Los Angeles River.

(8) Provide a system for coordinating the work of river rangers with programs and services offered by local governments and conservation corps.

(9) Incorporate the findings and principles expressed in the “Presidential Memorandum--Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in Our National Parks,

National Forests, and Other Public Lands and Waters,” dated January 12, 2017.

(c) No later than June 30, 2018, the conservancies shall submit a copy of the plan required to be prepared pursuant to subdivision (b) to the Assembly Committee on Water, Parks, and Wildlife and the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water, in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code.

(d) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2019, and as of that date is repealed.