



BOB BLUMENFIELD
COUNCILMEMBER, THIRD DISTRICT

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****PRESS RELEASE****

**COUNCILMEMBER BLUMENFIELD UNVEILS BOLD NEW PILOT PROGRAM TO
CLEAN UP LA RIVER**

Blumenfield calls for pilot program to establish an enforcement and outreach partnership program with MRCA along the LA River in the West Valley

LOS ANGELES, CA – Today Councilmember Bob Blumenfield introduced a new initiative to revolutionize environmental and law enforcement along the headwaters of the LA River by establishing a pilot program giving authority for the area to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA). Currently the River is a confluence of jurisdictions which has led to a number of difficult to resolve environmental and quality-of-life issues. Blumenfield's plan aims to cut the immense red tape and bureaucratic hurdles that currently exist around solving these issues and improve the environment and safety of the area.

"The status quo around how we handle issues along the LA River is broken," said Blumenfield. "I'm tired of the finger pointing around who is responsible for what and the time is now to bring in the MRCA, an organization that is tested, trusted, and perfectly suited to help resolve the complex, multijurisdictional problems we are facing."

"We have made progress toward improving conditions along the LA River in our area in collaboration with Councilmember Blumenfield, but we need a unified enforcement entity for the River," said Evelyn Aleman, co-founder of the L.A. River Walkers and Watchers. "The MRCA will bring much-needed support to neighbors living near and adjacent to the bike path, and help restore the bike path to its original use."

For the past few years, Blumenfield has worked closely with the L.A. River Walkers and Watchers, a group of Reseda neighbors committed to preserving the L.A. River bike path, on a number of quality-of-life issues. On clean up walks together they commonly find needles in shrubs and along the bike path, soiled clothes, fires, vandalized structures, drugs stashed under bridges, as well as people on drugs sprawled out and completely blocking the paths and parks. Recently, drug and gang activity appear to have increased in the river area, resulting in at least one homicide. Additionally, downstream bacteria levels can reach unsafe heights if waste enter the river at the headwaters.

Numerous proposals for improving the recreational opportunities along the River have been proposed, including the City's LA River Master Plan with ambitious designs for new parks and amenities for communities. The investment of tens of millions of taxpayer dollars in river improvements is a worthwhile goal, however, to provide the best value to the public these investments must be well planned and include practical solutions to environmental and other hazards and nuisances that will prevent the river vision from being fully realized. Conditions that will prevent the public from taking advantage of river amenities include perception of unsafe conditions,

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including but not limited to: public safety, response to incidents in and along the river, lack of care for natural resources, maintenance, pollution, illegal dumping, trash and obstructions to biking and walking paths.

One serious and complicating factor for enforcement, outreach, and cleanup along the Canoga Park and Reseda areas of the LA River is the multijurisdictional responsibility for different sections of the channel, paths, adjacent green space, underpasses, and access points. The US Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles County Flood Control District, and various Los Angeles City departments (Bureau of Engineering, Recreation and Parks, Transportation, Bureau of Street Lighting, LAPD, Sanitation and others) all have responsibility for some aspect of river area maintenance and enforcement, but there is no one coordinating entity among them with primary responsibility for this Canoga Park to Reseda stretch of the LA River.

As an established, trusted joint powers entity, the MRCA will have full enforcement capabilities that cross jurisdictions. The MRCA would take responsibility for the river environment in this pilot program to patrol the area, enforce relevant ordinances, ensure safety, assist with maintenance and operations, reduce hazards, offer interpretation and educational resources to the public, provide outreach to unsheltered individuals in the area, and ensure that the river is an amenity for the local community. As a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) agency whose Rangers are Sworn California Peace Officers with swift water, EMT, naturalist, and wildland firefighter training, MRCA can contract to work on all areas of the river regardless of which governmental entity has ownership for a particular area.

Blumenfield stated "In a recent meeting, we showed a picture of an encampment where within twenty feet you had land from five different governmental departments, all of which refused to take responsibility for the growing environmental issues. The LA River has been a jurisdictional nightmare for years and it is time to do something about it."

The motion will soon be heard in the Health, Education, Neighborhoods, Parks, Arts, River Committee.

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