

# THOMPSON CREEK SPREADING GROUNDS

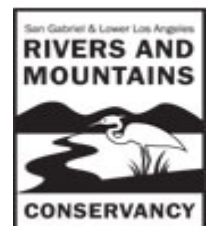
## Report on Conclusion of the FEASIBILITY STUDY 2010



by

Marilee Scaff

February 2011



# THOMPSON CREEK SPREADING GROUNDS

## REPORT ON CONCLUSION OF THE FEASIBILITY STUDY

When the League of Women Voters (LWV) was founded in Pomona Valley in 1938, its members immediately undertook a *Know Your City* study, concentrating on Claremont where most members lived. After that study, the LWV recommended that the City of Claremont buy its water company. (Pomona, Upland, LaVerne already owned theirs.) The City decided to stay with that “nice little company” over in San Dimas. A number of times since, the LWV has repeated that recommendation—to no avail. In 2005 when there was again talk about negotiating for the City ownership of Southern California Water’s infrastructure and water rights, the LWV Annual Meeting voted to establish a Water Task Force to study the question. Marilee Scaff was appointed Chair. In December the Task Force issued the results of their study, *Water Issues in Claremont, 2005*, with Marilee Scaff and Freeman Allen as authors. This study undertook to present precise and accurate facts without bias or point-of-view, presenting both pro-and-con arguments concerning the ownership of the water company. An anonymous League member with a long-time interest in water issues donated the cost of printing 1000 copies.

Subsequent study by League members and Board led to discussions which considered the desirability of public ownership, the lower cost of water in all our neighboring cities, the fact that Golden State Water Company (GSWC) rates are now regional and recent applications to the Public Utilities Commission make clear rates will continue to go up rapidly, the fact that GSWC now prices their ownership very high and negotiations will almost surely require eminent domain proceedings, but that after about 12 years Claremont could begin to see slower rate increases. The chief negative point was the high cost of acquiring the water company. At the LWV Annual meeting in June 2006, the members adopted a Water position which states:

### WATER Adopted 2006

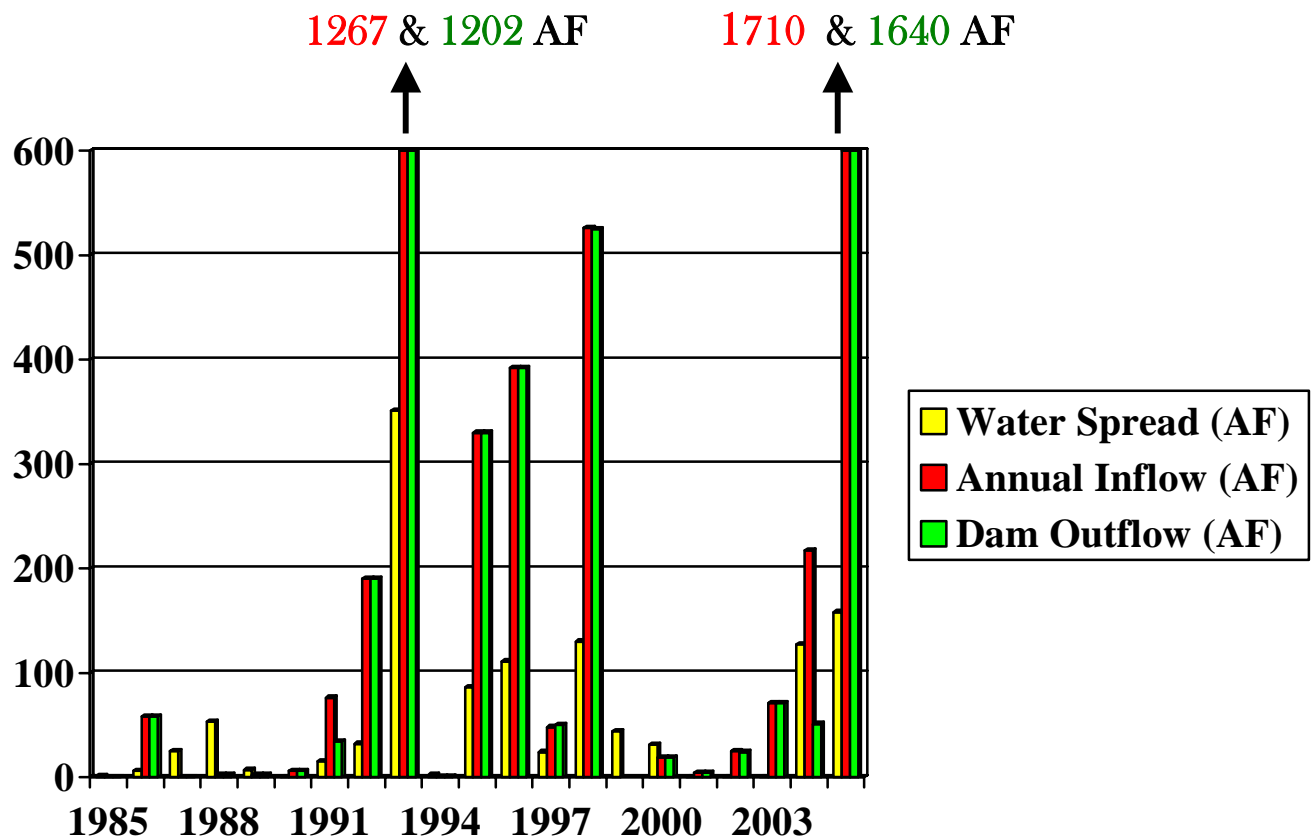
Support for policies, decisions, and practices that recognize clean and adequate water as essential to human life. Support for public ownership of water rights and utilities as vital public resources to ensure that public goals and purposes are reflected in policies and rates, including the prevention of any future acquisition of water resources by any non-public agency, international cartel, or other private interest or operation. Support for rate-setting based on actual costs of operation, with attention to economic fairness, taking into account costs of supplying water and quantity used, and recognizing, regardless of ownership, the inevitability of continued increases in water costs and ongoing maintenance expenses. Support for planning, development, maintenance, and operation of the water system in the best interest of residents and environment, with attention to long range issues of sustainability: conservation, recycling and reuse, reduction of urban run-off, coordination of surface water and ground water supplies, and increased efforts to limit use of imported water. Support for public acquisition of the local water system, converting the privately owned company to a city-owned water company by the use of public financing, believing that public control is worth the cost, even if high, and has long-range advantages to rate-payers and to the community.

During the next year, Marilee Scaff and Freeman Allen, now Co-Chairs of the Water Task Force, made more than 20 presentation to local groups— all the local service clubs, Active Claremont, Sierra Club, Audubon society, church groups; in fact, wherever invited— explaining as impartially as possible the pros-and-cons of water company ownership. Usually appearing together, occasionally alone, they passed out copies of the *Water Issues* booklet, explained issues of buying the Golden State Water Company as Claremont’s local water purveyor, and answered questions. They sought consultations with Senior Management of major players in water

delivery—City of Claremont, Three Valleys Municipal Water District, Golden State Water Company (since late 2005, the new name of former Southern California Water Company, now a subsidiary of American States Water, Inc.).

During 2006-2007 the Water Task Force broadened their study to focus on an issue raised by the new State Water Plan: how to reduce the need for imported water and increase local water resources for greater long-range sustainability -- a major long range problem in California because of possible earthquake or other catastrophic damage to the levees of the Sacramento Delta and the delivery canals. We postulated that in Claremont we could reduce the need for imported water by increasing the yield of our Six Basins Aquifer through improved retention of storm water and local water spreading, with appropriate pumping of local wells to relieve the problems of artesian water in Claremont and Pomona. After much discussion we decided not to focus on the San Antonio Spreading Grounds in north Claremont, because of legal problems of mining rights, actual gravel mining in pits on the San Bernardino County side, and the fact that Three Valleys MWD was applying for aid for a Conjunctive Use Project there.

We chose to concentrate on the Thompson Creek Spreading Grounds which records showed had only limited water spreading for the last 30 years. (See Fig. 1 below.)



Data from Los Angeles County Flood Control District and Three Valleys Municipal Water District.

Fig. 1. Thompson Creek Spreading Grounds Water Inflow, Dam Outflow, and Water Spread 1985-2005.

Our investigations and conversations led us to believe that use could be made of the old dam (built by LA County's Flood Control District in 1932) to increase storm water storage, then the spreading grounds employed to improve the yield of the Six Basins Aquifer. This should increase the supply of well water through the many wells spread throughout Pomona Valley. While saving storm water, the project could also restore four different kinds of biological habitats and convert the land into a natural park with low-impact public access. A cordial visit with L.A. County Supervisor Michael Antonovich sent us to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works and its constituent Water Management Division (Flood Control). Engineers in the Water Division did not discourage us from moving ahead.

Seeking sources of State bond money from Proposition 84, we attended workshops offered by the Lower Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC). Weeks of concentration and planning resulted in an application to RMC for a grant entitled *Thompson Creek Spreading Grounds: acquire, restore, develop*. We had promised the City of Claremont and fellow citizens that we would not seek either public or private funds from Claremonters, because they had just approved an \$11.5 million local bond issue to buy Johnson's Pasture and should be considered as having already borne their fair share of the expense of saving private land as open space. In November 2008 the RMC Board of Directors approved our application and offered to fund Phase I, a Feasibility Study, for \$200,000. Because of state budget constraints, the actual start-up signal for work to begin was not given until February 2010.

Meanwhile, the Water Task Force Co-Chairs had surveyed a list of ten possible consultants and chosen the firm of RBF Consultants to undertake this project. Larry McKinney, CEO of RBF, accompanied us on a tour of the TCSG. We were then put in contact with Ruth Villalobos and Aaron Pfannenstiel of the Ontario office of RBF, and in several preliminary conversations gave them copies of our conceptual plan for the future of the Thompson Creek Spreading Grounds (TCSG), shared relevant legal and geohydrologic records, and posed questions which we hoped the study would answer. RBF prepared a Scope of Work to outline what they proposed to do in undertaking these tasks.

The larger League Water Task Force, consisting at that time of Sandy Baldonado, Sally Seven, Jack Sullivan, and the current League President, served in an advisory capacity on all policy decisions. Contracts were negotiated and, when the signal to start work was given, contracts were signed with RMC and with RBF Consultants. Contracts specified a nine months Timeline for completion of this Phase of the project, a contract price with RBF of \$190,000, with \$10,000 reserved for LWV expenses on administration. Also an MOU was signed with Three Valleys Municipal Water District, as Richard Hansen, CEO, had kindly offered Three Valleys MWD as our Fiscal agent, paying checks as submitted and waiting for State reimbursement—all at no charge to LWV.

Several years of working with all the significant partners and related agencies was an important part of this process. The **City of Claremont** agreed to add the land to its Claremont Hills Wilderness Park, taking responsibility for liability, policing, and supervision of public access. **Three Valleys Municipal Water District** was willing to manage water aspects of the Spreading Grounds. They have been especially helpful in the whole project, providing water records of the Spreading Grounds, and advising on water issues. **Brian Bowcock**, Three Valleys Board member from this District, has kept up with our progress, and seen that we were invited at various times to be guests for MWD tours of Diamond Lake and the State Water Project which conveys water from the Feather River to Sacramento delta and on to Southern California. Three

Valleys MWD treats and sells State Water delivered by the Rialto Feeder which runs under North Claremont. **Los Angeles County** was cooperative, from Supervisor **Antonovich** on through his staff and the engineers in the Department of Public Works and its **Water Management Division** (Flood Control District). Several professional staff members of **Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden** visited the site with us at various times, provided Herbarium lists of plants collected in this specific canyon, found and identified endangered species, and offered help with appropriate plants when the Project comes to that stage. Dean Coduto and members of the faculty in **Civil Engineering at Cal Poly University-Pomona**, instituted two senior student seminars related to our Project: a possible water recycling plant and a watershed study. Persons from the City of Pomona and City of Upland were cordial and encouraging. Several faculty members of the **Claremont Colleges**, leaders of **Sustainable Claremont**, plus League members and citizens of Claremont and Pomona Valley, including several near neighbors of the project, all have been consulted and provided helpful community input and support as the project went forward.

**Pomona Valley Protective Association (PVPA)**, owner of the land, and its constituent agencies, **Golden State Water Company**, **Cities of Pomona** and **Upland**, all have been consulted and were quite encouraging. Floyd Wicks, President and CEO of Golden States Water Company mentioned casually the possibility of partially gifting some of the land for a tax write-off. PVPA, quite to our surprise, offered us \$25,000 for assistance with planning if it were matched, and the Claremont City Council voted to match that amount if needed. (LWV in fact never held these agencies to those original offers.) Cecil McAlister, for 35-years the water gage manager of the Spreading Grounds, kindly took various officials with us on many visits to see the site. PVPA in their original letter to RMC offered “a conservation easement or some other arrangement” for the land, but in August 2010 wrote a letter to RMC agreeing to be “a willing seller.” We continue in regular consultations with John Schatz, their attorney.

## **The Feasibility Study – A Summary of Findings**

### **The Conceptual Plan**

The League of Women Voters Water Task Force, led by Marilee Scaff and Freeman Allen, Co-Chairs, had developed a detailed Conceptual Plan for the projected use of Thompson Creek Spreading Grounds. First, a vision of increasing water retention through better use of the old dam and the Six Basins Aquifer. Then restoration and regeneration of four types of habitats: Alluvial Fan Sage Scrub, Riparian and Chaparral habitats, plus a newly installed wetlands to attract hillside animals and both resident and migratory birds. The Plan would require acquisition of this land which immediately joins the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park, making it available to the public for low-impact recreation. Many aspects of the Thompson Creek Spreading Grounds site were taken into consideration: the lay of the land using photographs, maps, details on water sources, possible improved storage, need for water spreading, legal constraints, habitats both relatively undisturbed and in need of restoration, species threatened or endangered, possible extension of biking and hiking trails, cooperation with partner agencies and local residents. Preparatory study included conversations with native Tongva tribe members in recognition of their ancient uses of this canyon. All this collected material was shared with RBF Consultants.

The RBF team which undertook this study consisted of Aaron Pfannenstiel, Carolyn La Prada, and Pam Arifian. The team immediately used our ideas and, with flowers photographed on the Thompson Creek site, designed a beautiful tri-fold brochure for public interpretative appeal. LWV had the brochures printed and circulated them widely in the community as outreach and invitation to public involvement. (See Brochure, Page 5.)



**League of Women Voters of the Claremont Area (LWV)**

LWV is a nonpartisan political organization encouraging the informed and active participation of citizens in government. It influences public policy through education and advocacy. The goal of the League of Women Voters is to empower citizens to shape better communities worldwide. [www.claremont.ca.lwvnet.org](http://www.claremont.ca.lwvnet.org)

**San Gabriel & Lower Los Angeles Rivers & Mountains Conservancy (RMC)**

RMC was created by the California legislature in 1999. RMC is one of nine conservancies within the California Resources Agency. Their mission is to preserve open space and habitat in order to provide for low-impact recreation and educational uses, wildlife habitat restoration and protection, and watershed improvements within their jurisdiction. [www.rmc.ca.gov](http://www.rmc.ca.gov)

**Community Support**

City of Claremont, Pomona Valley Protective Association, Three Valleys Municipal Water District, LWV, Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden-Sustainable Claremont, Claremont Wildlands Conservancy.

**We Want Your Input!**

For more information please visit:  
[www.claremont.ca.lwvnet.org](http://www.claremont.ca.lwvnet.org)

**League of Women Voters of the Claremont Area**

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Prepared by RBF Consulting

**THOMPSON CREEK SPREADING GROUNDS**  
Acquire, Restore, Develop

*Opportunities for  
Enhanced Groundwater Recharge  
Wetland Habitat for Native Species  
Low-Impact Recreation  
Education*



**Thompson Creek Spreading Grounds**

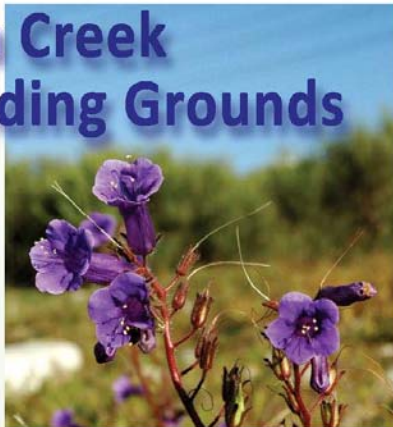
**Where is it?**

The Thompson Creek Spreading Grounds (TCSG) is approximately 120 acres of land owned by Pomona Valley Protective Association (PVPA). The land is located in northern Claremont at the northwest corner of Mills Avenue and Pomello Drive. The Claremont Hills Wilderness Park is adjacent to the north. (See map below.)

**What is it?**

For the past 100 years, TCSG has been used by PVPA for spreading local water captured from the foothills allowing it to percolate into the Six Basins Aquifer (map on right). PVPA was initially started in 1909 by citrus growers to ensure an ongoing water supply as the population of the region was growing and to protect the rights of the water users in Claremont, Pomona, Upland, and LaVerne.

The L.A. County Flood Control District constructed the Dam in 1931 on PVPA land and to this day they work together to operate TCSG and to conserve water flows on the property. Under various judgements, PVPA has the responsibility for spreading and conserving certain waters originating in the San Antonio Canyon and tributary canyons.



**Property Characteristics**

- **Land Use/ Zoning:** the Claremont General Plan Land Use map designates the property as Park and Resource Conservation;
- **Biological Resources:** vegetation types onsite include alluvial fan sage scrub, riparian habitat, and chaparral;
- Cultural importance to the Tongva Native Americans;
- Los Angeles County Flood Control District Earthen Dam built in 1931;
- City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power high tension power line easement;
- **Topography:** gentle to moderate sloping south of the dam & steep hillside/canyon areas north of the dam. Burbank Creek enters the site behind the dam from the west. Thompson Creek enters the site from the north; and
- Hiking & biking trail, and trail connecting to the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park.



**Vision**

LWV received a grant from the San Gabriel & Lower Los Angeles Rivers & Mountains Conservancy (RMC) for a Feasibility & Planning Study for the Phase I of the project entitled "Thompson Creek Spreading Grounds: Acquire, Restore, Develop". LWV envisions the following benefits:

- Increase water conservation and management including water spreading and groundwater recharge (possibly including reclaimed water);
- Establish a Wetland and Riparian Habitat for native and endangered species;
- Preserve land as Open Space as an extension of the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park; and
- Provide low-impact recreation and education opportunities for the Public.



## **Research and Analysis**

Many consultations took place between RBF staff and the LWV Water Task Force as the study got underway, and continued as it progressed. RBF reviewed existing information, wrote, discussed, and finalized the Scope of Work, and began field reconnaissance and investigation.

## **Feasibility Study - Summary of the Final Report**

The Feasibility Study Final Report opens with a summary of purpose and scope, the site, involved partners, and listing of existing conditions. Maps from Google, PVPA and other sources were consulted. A new map of Existing Conditions was developed by RBF to establish a baseline for later options and decisions. A intriguing new Map was made from an airplane using GIS and computer-controlled radar to produce a superior Topographical Map, picturing in accurate detail the precise elevations for planning of land use and habitat areas.

## **Opportunities and Constraints**

Opportunities and Constraints Analysis was analyzed both on a Map and as text. Both delineate project needs and existing conditions, some of which offer welcome advantages and some pose problems to be resolved. Data include charts of actual water spread at TCSG, 1999 to 2009, notes about location adjacent to Claremont Hills Wilderness Park, analysis of surface geology and watershed hydrology and the possibilities of groundwater recharge.

## **Geohydrologic Site Conditions**

Of special importance for this Feasibility study is a report, *Geohydrologic Constraint Analysis for Increasing Artificial Recharge in Thompson Creek, July 23, 2010*, prepared by GeoScience Support Services, Inc. Details on surface geology, soil permeability, rainfall and surface water inflow from the tributary creeks and the larger watershed assessed the potentials of the Thompson Creek site for water spreading.

Using comparative watershed analysis of Thompson Creek Spreading Grounds with spreading at Live Oak Dam, which is located immediately west of Thompson Creek Dam, and is comparable in area and rainfall, the hydrologists concluded that current long-term average artificial PVPA recharge of an average of 82 feet per year could be increased by 30 to 150 percent (30% to 150%). They recommended the collection of site-specific data regarding percolation potential and surface water inflows to provide a more accurate understanding of potential infiltration and a more accurate measure of actual recharge capacity. This would be accomplished by new gages to measure storm water inflow and two monitoring wells at the south edge of the property to measure effects on the aquifer. Monitoring wells would also indicate when more pumping from wells would be needed to prevent water flowing to the surface in old cienegas in this now heavily populated valley. These recommendations are incorporated into our final Map. (See Map, Preferred Concept Plan, at end of this Report.)

## **First Public Meetings and Community Input**

Early in the study process the RBF team designed and put on their website, linked to the LWV website, a questionnaire and opinion survey about Thompson Creek SG to which anyone could respond. An invitation to participate in this survey was also on a sticker on the Brochure described above. Tri-fold brochures were distributed at the City Hall, the local Library, and to various local groups or sites throughout the community. During Phase I of the Project RBF staff conducted two public meetings to present information and receive feedback at different stages of the Project development.

The first Public Meeting was held on April 24, 2010 at the Hughes Community Center and attended by a count of 110 persons representing a wide range of backgrounds and interests. All

public and private agencies which we had contacted were present, along with League members, residents of the neighborhood and other Claremont residents, as well as residents from all over the Valley. Fewer than half were League members. LWV provided a free simple luncheon.

RBF prepared a presentation and project overview. Then a group of tasks to encourage active participation began with hand-held tabulators recording answers to a slightly modified version of the above-mentioned questionnaire. Immediate tabulation of results created interest among the audience. Post-it notes identifying “Treasures”, “Challenges”, or “Visions” were next written by all participants and collected by six Cal Poly graduate students in Landscape Architecture who posted them under each category. These ideas were read quickly for all to hear. In the third activity people gathered in small groups (of 6 -8 people at each table) who, after discussion, wrote their Vision priorities for Thompson Creek Spreading Grounds. Each group sent one person forward to share their Vision statement. Cards on each table invited further comments. All the ideas were assembled by RBF and recorded in an interesting report of this meeting.

Significantly, there was wide general agreement that this land must be kept in as natural a state as possible, preserved *in perpetuity* for water spreading and open space with low impact public access. This input clarified our original project name, and resulted in changing the title from “acquire, restore and develop” to “acquire, restore and preserve.”

Following the meeting and public input, RBF prepared an Opportunities and Constraints Analysis, which became the subject of subsequent discussion and decisions. These included review of past records of water spreading, records of ground water recharge, and all the hydrologic material summarized in this report.

### **L.A. County Flood Control and Its Easements**

Contact with L.A. County Department of Public Works, Division of Water Management (Flood Control), was essential in clarifying critical water issues. Flood Control holds a number of easements on Thompson Creek land in addition to the land beneath the dam. Most of the land above the dam is an easement for flood control after winter rains, for removal of debris and for occasional removal of the silt which turbulent storm water deposits in the reservoir. County also takes responsibility for the safety of the dam, and after a careful study in 1996 completed a report, *Evaluation of Seismic Stability of Thompson Creek Dam*. Recommended seismic modifications were completed in November 2001 at a cost of \$2.2 million, and in cooperation with CA Department of Fish and Game, a revegetation project on the disturbed area was completed in January 2009 at a cost of an additional \$275,000. Keith Lilley, Senior Civil Engineer, and other engineers of DPW Division of Water Management, provided much technical information to both LWV and RBF. The capacity of the reservoir, elevations determining reservoir size, and maximum area which might be reached by a “100 year flood,” all are delineated by contour lines on the final Preferred Concept Map (at the end of this Report).

### **Biological Field Studies**

Dr. Thomas McGill, field biologist for RBF, conducted studies in the field and reported that the site contains 70 acres of Riversidean Alluvial Fan Sage Scrub (RAFSS), a remnant of the state’s “most threatened” habitat. His recommendation is to improve the quality of this habitat and restore its more varied bio-diversity by hand-thinning some of the present Mature stage to Intermediate or Pioneer stage RAFSS. Accomplishing this would involve sheet flow of storm water across the alluvial fan, using this larger area for water spreading which more nearly reproduces the pre-dam natural water flow and would regenerate a richer RAFSS habitat.



Dr. McGill also identified *Populus fremontii* (Fremont Cottonwood) in Burbank Canyon which drains into the reservoir from the west, a fact which supports our concept of reestablishing a grove of Cottonwood trees at the foot of the cliffs in the riparian area northwest of the dam.

Additionally, Dr. Lucinda McDade, Research Director, and conservation botanist Naomi Fraga, of Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden (RSABG), identified *Chorizanthe Parryi*, (Hairy spine flower) and *Berberis Nevinii* (Nevin's Barberry), both classified as threatened or endangered species, on the RAFSS area on the northeast corner of the property. They also printed for us the RSABG-Pom Herbarium list of all plants collected in Thompson Creek dam area from 1922 to 1938. That list, they pointed out, shows that a number of Oak species, including *Quercus engelmannii* and *Q. durata gabrielensis*, now listed as threatened species, once existed here. Our Feasibility Study recommends that the RAFSS in the northeast corner should be left as Mature RAFSS, undisturbed, to protect these identified threatened species. Reestablishing a grove of Engelmann Oaks in the disturbed land near the west entrance to the TCSG is part of our conceptual plan for habitat restoration.

### **Interpretive Element: Importance of Thompson Creek to Tongva Native Americans**

Mark Frank Acuña welcomed our request for interpretive material presenting the historical presence of the Tongva people in this Valley, and the importance to the Tongva people of the Thompson Creek area. He responded with a short essay, *The Place Below Snowy Mountain*. Marilee Scaff worked with him in editing this material and soliciting illustrations, primarily photographs taken at the Tongva village site at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden by Jean Rosewall, RSABG Volunteer. Acuña's essay appears as the Preface to the Feasibility Study. Because it seemed an important interpretive and outreach document, LWV contracted for 1200 copies for public distribution. Already anthropologists (e.g. at Pomona College and the Bower Museum in Santa Ana) have welcomed it. Others interested in California native tribes, ethnobotanists, cultural history buffs, and volunteers showing visitors through native gardens read it with delight. There has been very little written material available about the Tongva people. A copy of *The Place Below Snowy Mountain* is attached inside the back cover.

### **Alternative Concepts and Community Outreach**

Following the collection of all the above input, alternative conceptual designs were developed through careful consideration by RBF planners, engineers, biologists, regulatory specialists and the League of Women Voters representatives. Based on the Opportunities and Constraints Analysis and associated technical studies, three alternative concepts were developed to meet the project goals and the grant criteria of RMC. Starting from a map of Existing Conditions, in the plan formulation stage RBF created three additional alternate maps, Options A, B, and C for a possible future Plan for Thompson Creek Spreading Grounds.

### **Second Public Meeting Considers Options**

On September 25, 2010 the second public meeting featured copies of these four maps plus a beautiful pictorial representation of habitats decorating the walls of the meeting room, attracting study and conversation from groups as they arrived. Additional smaller copies were available on all the tables around which participants were seated. About 70 representatives of League and the community gathered for an update on the outcomes of the Feasibility study and expression of preferences among the Options offered. Again, all our partnering agencies and groups were represented, including five persons from the PVPA and Dennis Bertone of the RMC Board. After a Power Point presentation there were questions and discussion. Post-it notes written by participants were placed on each of the big Option boards. Cards for written comments invited all to express opinions or make suggestions. All questions were recorded and addressed both on the floor and in the final report.

At this meeting there was general agreement about desirable points from each of the three plans. Responders favored plans for improved water spreading including sheet flow over some of the RAFSS, new gages and monitoring wells as indicated, habitat restoration, location of possible wetlands and a connection for using reclaimed water if that becomes available. Participants liked low-impact recreation via paths for walkers, preferred bicycles to be limited on paths through natural areas, but wanted a path for bikers and walkers parallel to Mills Avenue connecting the Regional Bike Trail to Claremont Hills Wilderness Park trails. More parking along Mills Avenue was considered needed. Respondents recognized L.A. County Flood Control's responsibilities and accepted fencing off reservoir borders in case of unusually heavy rainfall, but hoped for cooperation of flood control with habitat restoration. All confirmed the need for City ownership and preservation of the land. Three Valleys MWD was thanked for its encouragement and help with fiscal management now and water spreading management later.

### **Feasibility Study Completed**

Based on community input and technical analyses, the Feasibility Study as formulated by RBF includes the required elements to achieve the LWV's project goals while working within constraints of the property and the surrounding environs. Addenda attached to the Final Report include: the original Grant application, RMC's Exhibit D, a Land Acquisition application prepared for CA Fish and Game, City's Land Use and Bicycle Plans, and various analytical documents and technical reports prepared as part of the study. The League of Women Voters was provided a draft copy on December 10, which was carefully read by Marilee Scaff, who offered some readjustments of organization and text, and small editorial corrections in preparation for a final discussion between LWV and RBF staff.

The conclusion of the Feasibility Study states priorities for development in five areas, the accomplishment of these depending primarily on funding, with elements numbered 1 (highest priority), 2, or 3. Accomplishing items numbered 1 is deemed necessary for the project to meet the grant criteria and goals of the LWV. Abridged, they are:

#### Water:

1. As much spreading as possible --sheetflow with stormwater on land south of the Dam and south of the TC Channel Trail
2. Gages and Monitoring wells as specified
3. Potential wetlands using recycled water.

#### Habitat:

1. Preserve Riversidean Alluvial Fan Sage Scrub (RAFSS)
2. Plant groves of native cottonwood and oak trees in appropriate zones.
2. Incorporate wetlands for wildlife and migratory birds.
3. Restore riparian habitat in Burbank Canyon and around creekside as possible.

#### Recreation:

1. Include loop trails throughout site, minimizing habitat impacts.
2. Connect existing Thompson Creek Trail with CHWP along Mills.

#### Education:

1. Provide non-intrusive exhibits on history, geology, hydrology, and Tongva people; signage blending with natural elements
2. Include large Tongva acorn-pounding stone with signage.

#### Legal:

Work to see site acquired and in public hands.

The **Preferred Concept Plan** concludes with the **Map and Summary of Concept Elements** which appears at the end of this Report.

As contracted, five complete copies of the Feasibility Study with Addenda, and an additional 10 copies of the major report with discs of the complete copy were provided to LWV on December 22. One copy of the Final Report plus one of the major report with disc were delivered to RMC on December 28, 2010. (Heavy rains closed the RMC Office in this interim.) RBF has also provided the League with large poster boards of the Options, Habitats, Topographical Map, and Final Preferred Plan and extra copies of the disc.

Of the five complete Feasibility Study copies: one has gone to RMC, one to City of Claremont, one to Three Valleys MWD, and one for League files. The remaining copy is held for possible use in another grant application. PVPA has been given one of the shorter ones with a disc of the complete study. Involved or interested Partners may have discs as needed.

### **Land Appraisal**

The League team had met on November 10, 2010 with RMC staff to go over final steps of the Feasibility Study. Jane Beesley, Deputy Executive Officer of the Watershed Conservation Authority and Valorie Shatynski, Deputy Executive Officer and our Project Manager at RMC, urged us to include a land Appraisal of the Thompson Creek site, using funds from our LWV Administration Budget. RMC provided two names of appraisers. After talking with both, we contracted with Thomas Erickson, an appraiser with 32-years experience in the San Gabriel foothills, who agreed to a 45-day timeline and \$3,500 fee.

His appraisal, received on December 9, 2010, brought some new information and clarification. The site is 150.06 acres (not 120.6 as indicated on the PVPA website), and L.A. County Flood Control easements encumber 113.34 acres of the land. (See p. 18 of the Appraisal document.) Other easements are for power lines and flood channels. Only 28 acres of the northwest hilly land is unencumbered by easements or license agreements (p. 19). Zoning under the Claremont General Plan as “P/RC, Park Resource Conservation district” assures the continuation of open space designation. In considering the land’s possible uses, the appraiser concludes that it has “virtually no alternate legal uses” (p. 21), no financially feasible uses (p. 22), and although development is physically possible, “with all these easements in place, the subject [land] has virtually no alternate legal uses” (p. 21). Its “highest and best use” is as open space for water recharge, settling basins and drainage channels (p. 22).

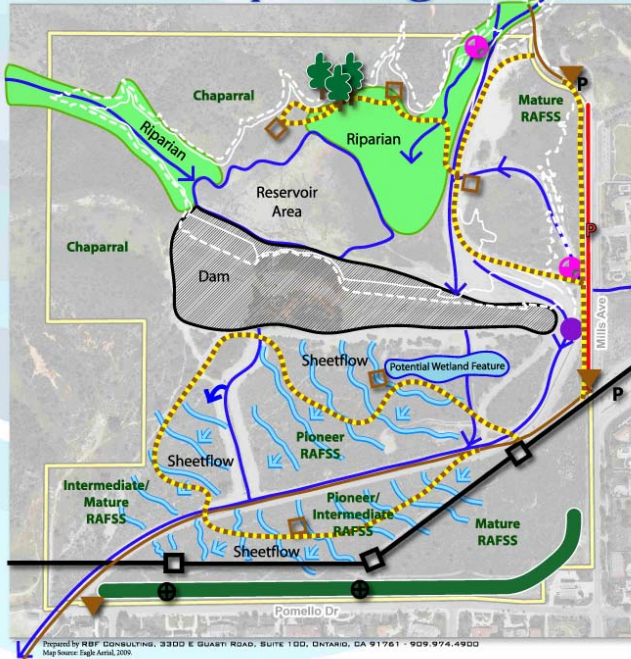
The Evaluation method Erickson used was the Market Data Approach, comparing this site with five other sites sold since 2007, including the Cuevas property on our west border. Calculating a market median of \$15,000 per acre and this subject property of 150.06 acres, his evaluation was Two Million Two Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars [\$2,250,000].

### **Notes of as February 2011:**

The Cuevas property, 150 acres immediately west of and adjoining the Thompson Creek land is now (as of January 2011) in escrow through the Trust for Public Land for a sale price of \$4,800,000. This purchase has been made in cooperation with the Claremont Wildlands Conservancy for the City of Claremont to add to their Claremont Hills Wilderness Park.

In 2005 the Cuevas land was sold for \$3,000,000 or \$19,904 per acre; the per acre value was adjusted downward by Mr. Erickson’s method to \$14,330. The Cuevas land was zoned for development of up to 22 lots. Thompson Creek land has no financially feasible uses. The evaluation of Thompson Creek at \$15,000 per acre totaled \$2,250,000 dollars. PVPA has spoken of “possibly gifting” some of the land. All these facts can be taken into account in negotiating for acquisition of Thompson Creek land.

# Thompson Creek Spreading Grounds



Existing		Proposed	
	Dam		Trails
	Waterflow		Educational Exhibits
	164' Maximum Reservoir		Sheetflow
	1634' Long-Term Reservoir		Intermediate and Pioneer Riverside Alluvial Fan Sage Scrub (RAFSS) Habitat
	Trails		Gaging Station
	Trailhead		Groundwater Monitoring Well
	Transmission Lines		Wetland/Riparian Habitat
	Riparian Habitat		Recycled Water Connection
	Chaparral		Diagonal Striped Parking Along Mills Avenue
	Mature Riverside Alluvial Fan Sage Scrub (RAFSS) Habitat		
	Berm		
	Parking		

## Concept Elements

- Water**
  - Maximize water spreading onsite (sheetflow stormwater on area south of the Dam, south of the Thompson Creek Channel/Trail, and west of the existing reservoir outlet in the southwest quadrant of the site).
  - Add gages at the east and west head gates, and where Chicken Creek enter the site. Add groundwater monitoring wells along southern border of site.
  - Potential wetland feature located just south of the Dam within the existing groundwater recharge pits. Use of recycled water will be required to sustain this feature.
- Habitat**
  - Enhance the riparian habitat surrounding the reservoir behind the Dam.
  - Plant groves of native cottonwood and oak trees within riparian areas onsite.
  - Preserve/enhance Riverside Alluvial Fan Sage Scrub (RAFSS).
  - Incorporate potential wetland feature for wildlife and migratory birds.
- Recreation**
  - Include loop trails throughout the site with connections to habitats onsite and the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park (CHWP) trails. Trail construction should avoid harming native habitats wherever possible.
  - Connect the existing Thompson Creek Trail and the CHWP trail along Mills Avenue.
- Education**
  - Provide non-intrusive educational exhibits that explain the history and relevance of the site. The exhibits would include information about the Tongva people, the native habitats onsite, as well as the geology and hydrology of the site.
- Other**
  - To address potential trail user conflicts, select design elements and signs would be used to deter mountain bikers from the pedestrian trails. The intended users of the trails are those who are physically unable to traverse the steeper CHWP trails such as those using walkers and/or strollers.
  - Parking could be officially designated along Mills Avenue and not to include additional paving with impermeable surfaces. Plan now for long term management, public access, and natural habitat.
- Legal**
  - The LWV would like to see the land in public hands and is working on appraisal for acquisition.
- Program Elements**
  - Shade structure with benches/tables
  - Include solar powered lighting
  - Benches along trails
  - Restroom facility (composting toilet if possible)
  - Entry gates that could be locked for public safety during storm events
  - Diagonal Parking along Mills Avenue

