



L.A. Stormwater

Improving the Water Quality of L.A.'s Lakes, Rivers and Oceans



Fall 2008 | Issue 4

Elmer Avenue: A Model Stormwater Green Street



Members of the San Gabriel River Watershed Council meet with local residents to discuss the Elmer Ave. project.

There is perhaps no better example of community partnerships than the Elmer Avenue Neighborhood Retrofit Project.

The Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council, along with Tree-People, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, active local citizens, the City of Los Angeles Bureau of Sanitation Stormwater Program, Bureau of Street Services, and numerous additional partners

have combined forces to implement a mixture of strategies to reduce flooding and water pollution in one Los Angeles neighborhood, as part of the broader L.A. Basin Water Augmentation Study.

"The Elmer Avenue project exemplifies the value of partnerships by bringing agencies and residents together to illustrate how low-impact development principles can be applied to existing infrastructure from the street level to the house level," said Edward Belden, Water Programs Manager of the Watershed Council.

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Downspout Disconnection Program



Coming to a Neighborhood Near You

Learn how the City's new Downspout Disconnection Program aims to divert over 1 million cubic feet of stormwater runoff.

[read more on page 5](#)

Clichéd but True - There's no I in Team



Stormwater Program Manager Shahram Kharaghanli explains how the City and its partners are coming together to make L.A. a cleaner, healthier place to live.

[read more on page 2](#)

Partnership Solves Sun Valley's Flooding Woes



Read how one innovative project is helping an area of Los Angeles cope with its chronic flooding problem.

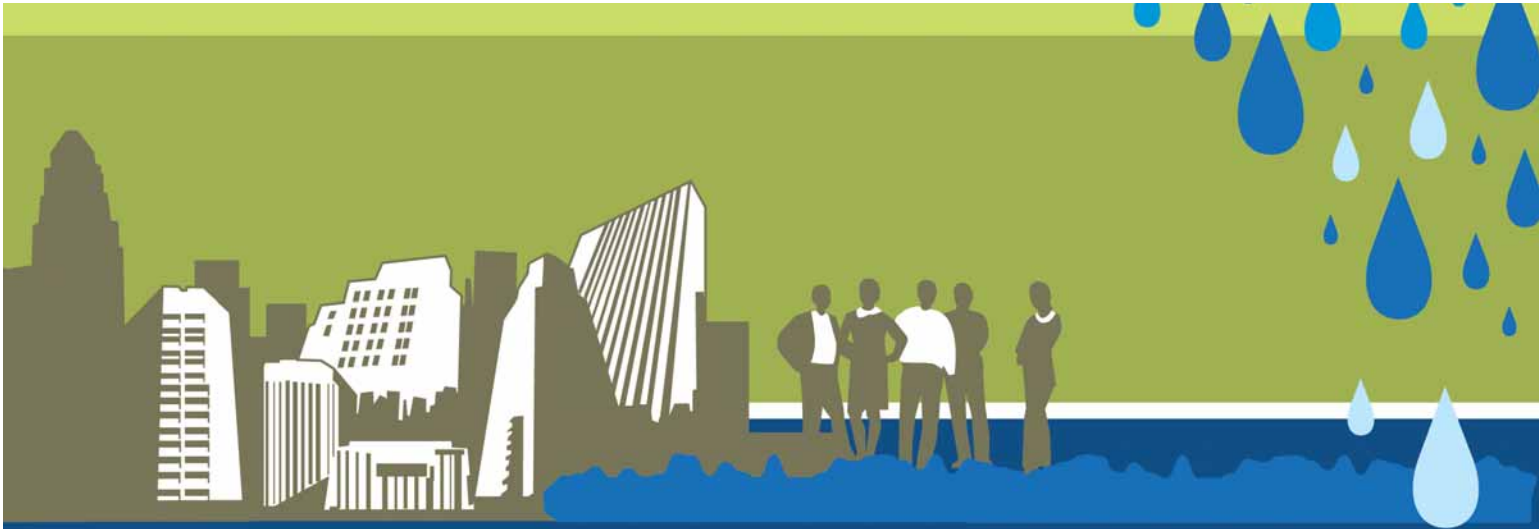
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Today's Scoop: Dog Waste Stinks!



Find out why it is important to pick up after your pets in to reduce water pollution.

[read more on page 6](#)



Clichéd but True - There's no "I" in Team *By Shahram Kharaghani*



Partnerships and community participation are vital components in our pursuit to improve water quality and livability in Los Angeles. Without the collaboration and input from many local non-profits, neighborhood organizations and other governmental agencies, it would be impossible for us to move forward and be successful with the work that we do on behalf of the public.

In this issue of *L.A. Stormwater*, we highlight a few of our collaborative projects. You'll see that the range of groups and individuals involved in our efforts is extensive.

We are proud of the innovative work that we are able to help support such as the Sun Valley Watershed Stakeholders Group that is working diligently to improve water quality in their portion of the city. The group meets once a month to explore ideas and proposals that address the area's chronic flooding problems, and to plan public education and outreach activities. It is organizations like these that are making a difference.

Equally important is the work of the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission who helped fund a downspout disconnection initiative through state Proposition 12. Ultimately, this initiative will assist area homeowners reduce urban runoff after a rainfall by one million cubic feet of water.

Or take the work of the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council, a non-profit organization comprised of community groups, government agencies, businesses and academics that is working cooperatively to address water issues within two watersheds. The Watershed Council focuses on motivating local citizens to become directly involved in the consensus-building process, where they can impact water quality through community action. On Elmer Avenue in Los Angeles, the Watershed Council and their

partners such as TreePeople are working with local residents to retrofit their properties with new infrastructure to divert stormwater runoff.

It is projects and organizations like these that we are excited about partnering with and highlighting herein. As I noted above, we would not be able to address so many issues in so many different locations if it were not for the people and groups that are committed to making our vibrant city a better, healthier place to live.



Residents sign up to participate and learn more about projects in their local communities.

The City of Los Angeles Stormwater Program may not be able to take the lead on all of these projects but we are nonetheless pleased to be involved in these fresh, cutting-edge programs, where stakeholders and local residents are coming together to improve our community, as well as the environment that sustains us all.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Shahram Kharaghani
Stormwater Program Manager



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Water accumulates on Elmer Ave. after a rain shower, a problem that will soon be fixed.

Elmer Ave: A Model Stormwater Green Street

The Elmer Avenue project will ultimately capture 16 acre-feet of stormwater and dry-weather runoff annually to reduce flooding, increase green space for bird and butterfly habitat, and improve groundwater supplies, as well as increase community awareness of watershed issues. Research will be conducted on the program's effects on water quality in the area, and it will serve as an example of low-impact community revitalization.

The Elmer Avenue project will show that innovative techniques in building and neighborhood design can capture rain and runoff, thereby protecting nearby beaches from pollution carried by stormwater while, at the same



Flooding on Elmer Ave., as shown above, will be contained and managed through various projects.

time, increasing local groundwater supplies. Unlike any before it, the project is dependent upon direct participation from local residents who want to take the initiative and do their part to improve local water quality.

The Water Augmentation Study, of which the Elmer Avenue project is part of, is a long-term research initiative led by the non-profit Watershed Council.

The study explores the potential for increasing local water supplies and reducing water pollution by increasing infiltration of stormwater runoff.

"The results from the Water Augmentation Study and the lessons learned from this project demonstrates how agency and community partners can come together to improve water quality, increase local water supplies, create native habitat, and revitalize neighborhoods while using stormwater as an asset," said Nancy Steele, the Watershed Council's Executive Director.

The first phase of the study was completed in 2002 and investigated groundwater quality ramifications of infiltrating stormwater by monitoring water quality at two separate locations within Los Angeles. Phase 2 of the study expanded the first phase by monitoring an additional four sites and was completed in 2007. Phase 3 of the L.A. Basin Augmentation Study is currently taking a closer look at the viability of region-wide water infiltration. This phase incorporates demonstration projects on a neighborhood-wide scale, such as the Elmer Avenue project, where existing infrastructure such as sidewalks and stormdrains are designed or retrofitted to locally manage stormwater and flooding issues using a variety of sustainable methods. This project is funded through various organizations and grants including major support from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and a Proposition 50 grant from the Department of Water Resources.

"I am really looking forward to this project. It will provide much needed sidewalks and rain gardens to Elmer Avenue," says Diane, an Elmer Street resident. "For decades we have had chronic flooding problems. It will be great to have these in place in time for the upcoming rainy season!"

For more information: <http://www.lasgrwc.org/WAS.htm>





Partnership Solves Sun Valley's Flooding Woes

A collaboration of the City of Los Angeles Stormwater Program, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works and the not-for-profit Tree-People is creating a large-scale sustainable watershed management demonstration project in a 4.4 square mile area of the San Fernando Valley watershed known as Sun Valley.

The Sun Valley Watershed Stakeholders Group that initiated the watershed management demonstration project was formed in 1998. It aims to develop holistic solutions to the chronic flooding in the area, and offer multiple benefits to Sun Valley residents. The Sun Valley Park Multiuse Project and the Tuxford Green Multiuse Project are two stellar examples of how this collaboration utilized innovative methods to solve flooding problems that have plagued this community for decades.

The Sun Valley Park Multiuse Project is designed to solve the local flooding problem while retaining all stormwater runoff (approximately 48 acre-feet) from the surrounding areas that drain into the park. A few of the project's benefits include increasing water conservation, creating residential recreational opportunities, establishing wildlife habitat, and reducing stormwater pollution.

The Sun Valley Park Multiuse Project takes a non-traditional approach by collecting stormwater from a 24-acre community upstream and routing it through a treatment train that removes suspended solids and heavy metals. The runoff is then directed into two large underground infiltration basins where the water is naturally filtered and ultimately recharges the aquifer. Buried beneath playing fields at Sun Valley Park, these two basins work silently while soccer and softball teams play on the fields above. Vegetated swales using California native plants and dry wells treat stormwater runoff from the park's 21 acres.

"This pilot project is an example of a paradigm shift away from conventional flood control solutions," said Ammar Eltawil, Civil Engineering Associate IV with the City's Watershed Protection Division. "Stormwater runoff will recharge the aquifer instead of flooding Sun Valley's streets." In addition, recreational enhancements and interpretative kiosks provide an important opportunity for residents to learn about the Sun Valley watershed and the sustainable solutions hard at work while they play in the park.

The project serves as a model in demonstrating the effectiveness of non-traditional stormwater management techniques that will be implemented throughout the Sun Valley watershed. "This project is the first of its kind in the nation, and it will serve as a model for several other watershed management projects planned to mitigate stormwater quality concerns and assist with meeting the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) regulations," continued Eltawil.

The Tuxford Green Multiuse Project addresses chronic flooding at the intersection of San Fernando and Tuxford Street. During the rainy season the intersection was often impassable due to heavy water accumulation. The project redesigned the intersection with a flood control system that conveys most stormwater under the road instead of over it.



A view of the infiltration system recently constructed below Sun Valley Park.

A portion of the water is stored in a 45,000 gallon cistern where it is then used to irrigate landscaping at a newly created pocket park that is lush with native plants and drought-resistant vegetation.

The collaborative effort of the Sun Valley Watershed Project has received worldwide recognition. In 2003 the United Nations World Forestry Organization's State of the World's Forests featured the Sun Valley Watershed Project as an outstanding example of partnerships creating a sustainable water supply. In 2006 the Sun Valley Park Multiuse Project was awarded the Outstanding Public/Private Sector Civil Engineering Award from the American Society of Civil Engineers and was recognized by *Environment NOW* as one of the *Top Environmental Achievements in the Environmental Community in Southern California*.



Downspout **Disconnection Program**

Coming to a Neighborhood Near You - **Disconnected Downspouts**

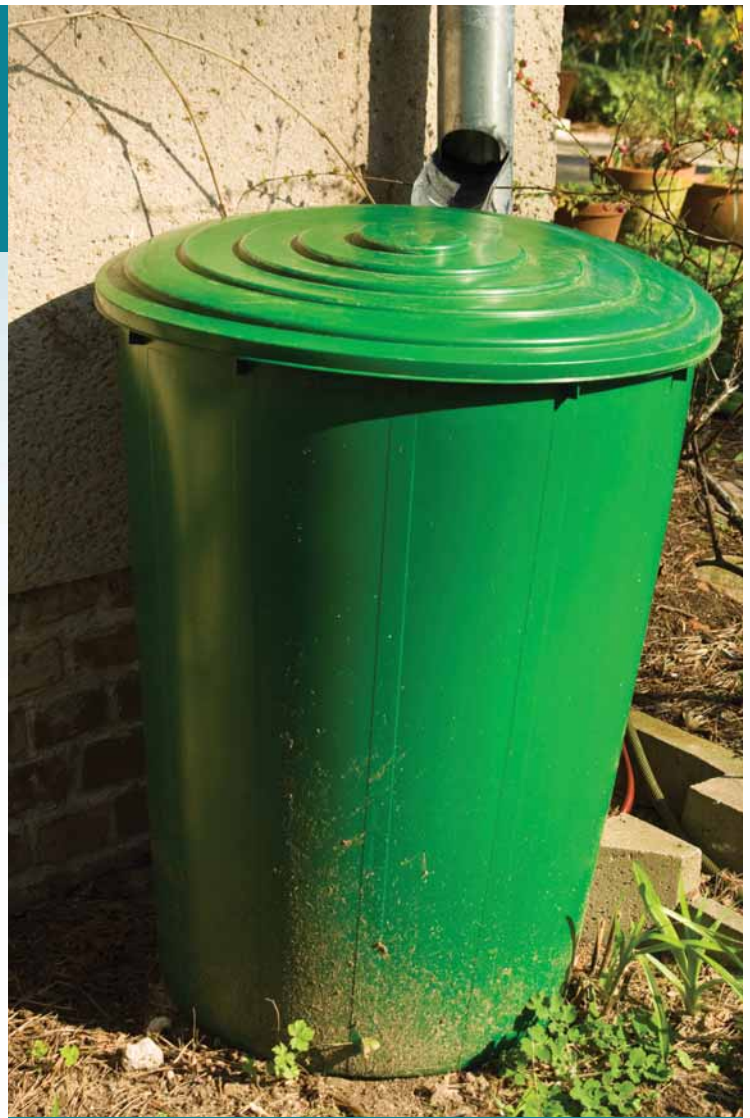
The City of Los Angeles recently announced a new project, the Downspout Disconnection Program, that aims to help manage localized floods and improve water quality on private property throughout the city, especially in areas that currently have limited storm drain capacity.

The pilot program, slated to begin in December 2009, will provide home and property owners, neighborhood associations and roofing contractors a chance to work as partners with the City of Los Angeles. In addition to reducing runoff and flooding, this project will also reduce potable water needs by considerably increasing the use of rainwater for irrigation.

"If every single household captured some water – just a little – we wouldn't have to buy as much from out of state," Jassim-Pugh, a landscape architect from Santa Monica, told the Los Angeles Times.

The Downspout Disconnection Program was first identified in the Ballona Creek Watershed Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMP) Strategy and Implementation Project Report. This Report was completed in September 2005 by a task force consisting of the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission (SMBRC) the County of Los Angeles, the Cities of Los Angeles, Santa Monica, West Hollywood, Culver City, environmental group Heal the Bay, and Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board.

"This is the ultimate multi-benefit project, with multiple partners," says Kosta Kaporis, Environmental Engineer with the City's Watershed Protection Division. "Reducing the amount of flow that is discharged into the storm drain assists with flood control, replenishes



Rain barrels, like the one shown above, can greatly reduce runoff by capturing water before it runs in to the streets. This stored water can then be used to nourish plants, lawns and gardens.

the groundwater and reduces the amount of potable water needed for irrigation."

Up to 600 residential and commercial property owners are expected to participate in the program, which is receiving funding through a million-dollar grant from Proposition 12 administered by the SMBRC via the State Coastal Conservancy.

Once completed, the project will reduce more than one million cubic feet of runoff from entering Ballona Creek every year. The pilot project will also serve as a template for developing citywide standards for stormwater diversion on private property through Los Angeles in the future.



Dogs and their owners learn about the dangers of unattended dog waste.



Educator, Josh Frank, demonstrates to a group of dog owners how to properly dispose of dog waste.

Today's Scoop: Dog Waste Stinks!

You may think that dog waste left on the ground is a nuisance and an eyesore. However, did you know that when people don't pick up after their dogs they are putting other pets and even the health of beach-goers and aquatic life at great risk?

The City of Los Angeles Stormwater program has taken the initiative to address the problem throughout the city, educating dog owners about the importance of picking up after their pets to decrease the risk of pet disease and water pollution. One way that the Stormwater Program has reached dog owners is by teaming up with local dog trainers to conduct hands-on presentations. In this past year, the program was able to conduct presentations and distribute educational materials and free dog waste bags to more than 500 dog owners.

"I can't tell you how much the students and trainers appreciate the program," says dog trainer Karen Taylor of My Best Friend Obedience in Van Nuys. "After the stormwater/pet waste presentation, I see my students actually using the free bags they get! This program is near and dear to us here."

Unattended dog waste can infect other dogs with diseases such as *Canine Parvovirus* and *Canine Distemper*. These illnesses can cause dogs to have partial or total paralysis, irreparable nerve damage, vomiting and diarrhea. Eventually, if the waste is not picked up and disposed properly, it can be washed into our storm drain system where this toxic mixture of fecal matter and urban runoff then flows untreated to the ocean.

You make the difference! If you're interested in scheduling a presentation, please e-mail the City's Stormwater Program at lastormwater@lacity.org.

City of L.A. Stormwater Program Resources

Recycling & Hazardous Waste Disposal

City of Los Angeles
(for businesses)
(800) 98-TOXIC / 988-6942

City of Los Angeles
(for residents)
Stormwater Program Hotline
(800) 974-9794

Los Angeles County
(for residents)
(888) CLEAN-LA / 253-2652

To Report Illegal Dumping or Clogged Catch Basins

City of Los Angeles
Stormwater Program Hotline
(800) 974-9794

Los Angeles County
Department of Public Works
(888) CLEAN-LA / 253-2652

To Obtain Free Educational Materials

City of Los Angeles
Stormwater Program Hotline
(800) 974-9794
LAstormwater@LACity.org

One Call to City Hall: 3-1-1



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