

## PRESS RELEASE

### Media Contacts:

Riverpark Coalition Long Beach, California  
Elena Tucci, Secretary, Riverpark Coalition  
562-355-5189  
[press@riverparkcoalition.org](mailto:press@riverparkcoalition.org)



Benjamin Harris  
Senior Staff Attorney, Los Angeles Waterkeeper  
(310) 394-6162 ext. 102  
[ben@lawaterkeeper.org](mailto:ben@lawaterkeeper.org)



### Release Date:

January 27, 2025

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Watershed Conservation Authority Awarded Two Grants for Wrigley Heights River Park Project

**LONG BEACH, Calif.**—Riverpark Coalition and Los Angeles Waterkeeper are pleased to announce that the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) has awarded the Watershed Conservation Authority two separate grants for the Wrigley Heights River Park land [acquisition](#) and [park planning](#) project during their January 22, 2025 Board Meeting held at Bellflower City Hall. The grants, totaling \$19.3 million, will facilitate the acquisition and environmental restoration of approximately six acres of land owned by the Jeanne E. McDonald Revocable Trust (McDonald Trust). This work is a crucial step in the development of a portion of what is commonly referred to in Los Angeles River and other related planning documents as Wrigley Heights River Park North.

Identified as a high-potential park opportunity site in the RMC's [Lower LA River Revitalization Plan](#), the Wrigley Heights River Park encompasses two separate parcels along the Los Angeles River at the intersection of the I-405 and I-710 freeways. Riverpark Coalition, a community-based organization of western Long Beach residents who lack equitable access to green space and face disproportionate pollution burdens, has advocated preserving these sites as open space for years. The acquisition supported by these funds is consistent with RMC's plan and the 2015 update to the City of Long Beach's [RiverLink Plan](#), unanimously approved by city council that same year.

The land that will be acquired with these funds is one of the last two remaining undeveloped tracts along the Los Angeles River in Long Beach. The McDonald Trust has been collaborating with the RMC to ensure the property's future as a vital public green space. The property is located in the area of 3701 Pacific Place, where Pacific Avenue/Place ends at the north on-ramps to the I-405 and I-710 freeways.

Juan Ovalle, President of the Riverpark Coalition and Benjamin Harris, Senior Staff Attorney for Los Angeles Waterkeeper, issue the following statement in response to the grants for acquiring the McDonald Trust parcels: "Riverpark Coalition and LA Waterkeeper would like to express our sincere gratitude to the RMC Governing Board for their unanimous decision to approve these grants and to the RMC staff for their extensive research and exceptional work in bringing these projects to consideration. We thank the McDonald Trust for being an open and willing partner in this process. We acknowledge Long Beach Councilmembers Megan Kerr (Fifth District) for submitting a letter of support to RMC and Roberto Uranga (Seventh District) a member of RMC Board for his vote in favor of the acquisition and planning for this key portion of the northern Wrigley Heights River Park site. Finally, a sincere thank you to the members of the community for their support in shaping the future of western Long Beach so that all residents have equitable access to green spaces and improved air quality."

The advantages of preserving this site as a publicly accessible green space are immeasurable. This project will deliver significant benefits to the surrounding communities, and enhance the health and well-being of nearby residents, by:

**Promoting Equity and Accessibility:** Providing much-needed recreational opportunities for Long Beach's Westside residents, addressing existing disparities in park access.

**Improving Environmental Health:** Enhancing air quality through oxygen production, additional carbon capture, and mitigation of dust and fine particulate matter. Additionally, the project will offer opportunities to improve stormwater management and reduce the amount of polluted runoff that ends up in the Los Angeles River.

**Increasing Flood Resiliency:** The green space will serve as a floodable area for nearby stormwater runoff, mitigating flood risks to surrounding areas and helping to reclaim the Los Angeles River's natural floodplain.

**Enhancing Ecological Value:** Building upon the proven success of RMC projects, this initiative will significantly enhance the ecological value of this urban area by creating additional habitat opportunities for native plants, birds, and other critical species.

"The Rivers and Mountains Conservancy's unanimous decision to award grants for the Wrigley Heights River Park acquisition and planning project is a momentous victory for western Long Beach," declares Juan Ovalle, President of the Riverpark Coalition. "This is a significant step

towards addressing the stark disparity in park access between Long Beach's Westside, where residents have less than two acres of green space per 1,000 people, and the Eastside, which boasts 17 acres per 1,000 residents. Riverpark Coalition's community and environmental advocacy, alongside LA Waterkeeper, will continue to unequivocally convey a powerful message: the well-being of our community, the preservation and creation of vital green spaces, and the quality of life for our children are paramount and worth every ounce of our collective effort."

While the RMC's acquisition of the McDonald Trust parcels is a significant victory for the environment and the communities of western Long Beach, more must be done to ensure the Wrigley Heights River Park (North) site is protected. Starting in 2021, Riverpark Coalition joined forces with LA Waterkeeper to prevail in a lawsuit brought under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and halt InSite's proposed development of a self-storage warehouse and recreational vehicle storage lot and facility, forcing a full Environmental Impact Report. InSite is still moving forward with the proposed project, located on the western parcel, adjacent to the newly approved Wrigley Heights River Park site. Riverpark Coalition and LA Waterkeeper remain steadfast in their efforts to oppose the development and will continue to promote park space as a more appropriate and much needed land use.

"The Watershed Conservation Authority's acquisition of the McDonald Trust parcels is a critical first step toward turning the entire area into open space for the benefit of western Long Beach communities," said Benjamin Harris, Senior Staff Attorney for Los Angeles Waterkeeper. "We are optimistic that this significant milestone will advance our efforts to add green space throughout the Los Angeles River watershed and reclaim the river's natural floodplain to the greatest possible extent."

###

**Riverpark Coalition** is Long Beach's only environmental justice organization dedicated exclusively to improving access to the lower Los Angeles River, promoting park equity, and developing planned green space in western Long Beach. As a community group and policy advocate, they are committed to holding Long Beach decision-makers, elected officials, and city planners accountable for delivering on commitments to build green infrastructure along the river and facilitate community access. Visit them at <https://www.riverparkcoalition.org/>.

**Los Angeles Waterkeeper** has served as LA's water watchdog for more than a quarter century, safeguarding our inland and coastal waters using the law, science, and community action. They work to eliminate pollution, achieve ecosystem health for our waterways, and secure a resilient, multi-benefit, low-carbon water supply for the region. LA Waterkeeper is an organization of Waterkeeper Alliance, the world's fastest-growing environmental movement. Along with nearly 350 other Waterkeeper Organizations, their movement works for swimmable, drinkable, and fishable waterways worldwide. Visit them at [www.lawaterkeeper.org](http://www.lawaterkeeper.org) or follow them on social media [@lawaterkeeper](https://twitter.com/lawaterkeeper).