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Characterization of water quality in the Los Angeles River

Drew Ackerman, Kenneth C. Schiff, Heather Trim¹ and Mike Mullin²

¹*Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council, Los Angeles, CA*

²*City of Los Angeles, Stormwater Management Division, Los Angeles, CA*

ABSTRACT

The Los Angeles River is one of the most highly modified water systems in the world. Dramatic engineering modifications to control the river have successfully reduced flooding and property damage, but little of this design has incorporated water quality improvements. The goal of this study was to identify sources of potential pollutants and characterize water quality along the river's seven reaches during dry weather. The three primary sources of potential pollutants included water reclamation plants (WRPs), major tributaries, and storm drain outfalls. The three WRPs discharged the majority (72%) of the volume flowing in the Los Angeles River during this study. Likewise, the three WRPs discharged the highest concentrations and greatest mass emissions of nutrients including nitrate, nitrite, ammonia, and total phosphate. In contrast, 66 flowing storm drains and 6 flowing tributaries had the highest concentrations and mass emissions of bacteria including total coliform, *E. coli*, and *Enterococcus*. Water quality in the Los Angeles River responded to inputs of these pollutants. Levels of nutrients were generally low upstream and downstream of the WRPs (<0.1 mg/L ammonia), but were greatest in the immediate vicinity of the WRPs (approximately 6 mg/L ammonia). Concentrations of bacteria were generally high upstream and downstream of the WRPs (ca. 10⁴ MPN/100 mL *E. coli*), but were lowest in the immediate vicinity of the WRPs (ca. 10² MPN/100 mL *E. coli*).

Full Text

ftp://ftp.sccwrp.org/pub/download/DOCUMENTS/AnnualReports/2001_02AnnualReport/08_ar08-drew.pdf