



Flood Control District of Maricopa County

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El Rio Watercourse Master Plan for Gila River Moves Ahead with Five-Year Implementation Plan

GOODYEAR, Ariz. (Oct. 14, 2008) – For years, the mesquite trees within the Estrella Mountain Regional Park have provided a shady locale for family gatherings and business retreats. Last Wednesday, community leaders dedicated to rejuvenating the Gila River gathered at the regional park to celebrate recent accomplishments and outline the future implementation of a comprehensive plan for the river corridor.

Maricopa County District 5 Supervisor Mary Rose Wilcox, joined by her colleague District 4 Supervisor Max Wilson, led a meeting focusing on the El Rio Watercourse Master Plan, a blueprint of strategies for regional flood control, development, recreation and wildlife habitat preservation for a 17.5-mile stretch of the Gila River through Avondale, Goodyear and Buckeye. The plan is a cooperative agreement between the three municipalities, the Flood Control District of Maricopa County, and the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation and Planning and Development departments.

“Max and I are very proud we are proceeding forward with El Rio, dreamed many years ago, which is becoming a reality,” said Supervisor Wilcox. “This has been a work of the heart.”

Accomplishments of the plan to date include the El Rio Educational Research and Development Project river re-vegetation site, a Memorandum of Understanding establishing four committees to oversee the implementation of the plan and a proposed timeline for the implementation of future projects.

“Maricopa County, the Flood Control District and the cities are small parts of a team effort,” remarked Supervisor Wilson. “Together we are a good moving force and every step we take is becoming bigger and bigger.”

The proposed projects over the future five-year timeline include river bank erosion protection, two lakes, river loop trail construction and re-vegetation to eradicate invasive salt cedar in the riverbed.

Wilcox put forth a motion during the meeting to move forward with the implementation of the proposed projects. She received unanimous approval among those in attendance, including Buckeye Mayor Jackie Meck and Avondale Mayor Marie Lopez-Rogers, both long-time residents of the Gila River area, and Goodyear Councilwoman Joanne Osborne. Each elected official expressed the critical need to preserve and enhance the river for future generations.

Looking forward, Wilcox made a call for local citizens to become actively involved with the El Rio plan implementation through the Citizen Advisory Committee. Members of the committee will help organize events and raise awareness and grassroots support, possibly starting a “Friends of El Rio” group.

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“Now that we have a five-year implementation plan, we need to make sure El Rio is front and center in the comprehensive plans of Avondale, Goodyear and Buckeye,” Wilcox said in her closing remarks.

The Flood Control District of Maricopa County is tasked to provide regional flood hazard identification, regulation, remediation, and education to Maricopa County residents so that they can reduce their risk of injury, death, and property damage from flooding, while still enjoying the natural and beneficial values served by floodplains.

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