

PROPOSAL SUMMARY

1. Project Name: Gardena Willows Wetlands Enhancement

2. Type of Project (check only one): Acquisition Planning
 Restoration/Enhancement

3. Project summary (1-2 sentences -- specify key action(s) to be undertaken):
Purpose of the project is to build a nature center to inform and educate the public on the value of protecting the wetlands and, ultimately, the ocean. The project will also enhance the upland area immediately adjacent to the wetlands by removing invasive exotic plant materials and replacing them with native materials that will increase habitat for native species.

4. Location: County: Los Angeles County
Watershed: Dominguez Watershed
State Senate District #25 Ed Vincent
State Assembly District #51 Jerome Horton

5. Acreage: Total acreage of project area: 2 .
Acres of existing (pre-project) wetland habitat: 13
Acres of post-project wetland habitat: 13 .
Feet of stream corridor : Approximately one half mile

6. Budget Summary: Total project cost: \$ 300,000 .
Amount requested from WRP: \$ 300,000 .

7. Contact Information:
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8. Proposal prepared by: David Negrete, Park Superintendent

Signature _____ Date May 13, 2003

PROJECT PROPOSAL

Site Description

The project is located approximately one half mile northwest of the intersection of the Artesia freeway and Vermont Ave. in the Dominguez Watershed within the City of Gardena. The Gardena Willows Wetlands is one of the last natural remnants of the Dominguez Watershed. The Willows Wetlands is a 13.6 acre site with 9.4 acres of wetlands and 4.2 acres of surrounding upland. The Wetlands is fed by urban runoff from an approximately one square mile of high density population. The runoff that feeds the Willows is the largest contributor to its water quality problems. Despite the runoff, the riparian that is the Willows remains quite healthy.

The Willows Wetlands is a natural riparian corridor passing through an urban area. Man has heavily impacted some areas of the surrounding the site. The area is surrounded on the north by various types of housing including single family home, apartment building, townhomes and two senior citizen complexes. On the west and south, commercial developments have been on constructed. The east border is Vermont Avenue. For years, the City used the surround upland and adjacent areas as a dump site. Despite this development, the Wetlands themselves remain 95% natural. Goddings, Black and Arroyo willows compromise most the of tree canopy. The undergrowths include cattails, tule and water primrose.

The Wetlands provide a habitat for over forty species of birds and wildlife. The birds are resident, migrating or visitor birds. Because of its small size and isolation, the Willows cannot support a large wildlife population. However, because of its high quality riparian forest, the number of migratory birds and wildlife is high relative to its size.

The Willows was left untouched and locked for many years. In 1991, the City successfully competed for grant money to begin enhancing the site. The City acquired over 1.2 million dollars in grant funds to restore and enhance the Willows. The City hired the firm of Jones and Stokes Associates to study the Willows and develop an enhancement plan. In 2000, the City began to implement Phase II of the plan. Non-natives were replaced with natives, an irrigation system was installed and a trail was graded but completely installed. This work was limited to the north side of the Willows. The City is now in the process of implementing Phase III. Phase III will also include removal of exotics and planting natives. Additionally, it will include completion of the trail system with decomposed granite, a walkway that will traverse the site, overlooks to bring patrons closer to the canopy and drainage improvements to prevent erosion on the north side.

As the City committed to improve the Willows, the City suffered through a period of financial difficulties. The City was and still is unable to provide the level of support needed for areas that were completed under Phase II. The City began organizing volunteers to remove exotics that emerged after construction. Though no formal organization yet exists for the volunteers, the City plans to promote the site after the completion of Phase III. These volunteers will be instructed to distinguish between native and non-native plant material. The City has an authorized but un-funded "Naturalist" classification. Under the direction of the Recreation and Human Services Department, this naturalist classification will conduct tours and informational meetings about the Willows. Docents may also be hired to assist in these matters. Local college, high school, and other students will be invited to learn and appreciate the Willows.

It is the City's goal to build a sense of ownership and pride in this rare jewel. The completion of Phase III will allow the public to access and enjoy what was previously locked away. It is hoped that this exposure to potential volunteers will facilitate the recruitment of additional volunteers.

Project Description

The proposal has three components that are discussed below.

A Nature Center

The purpose of the project is to construct a nature center and re-vegetate areas that were cleared but not planted. The nature center would be pivotal point in enable a naturalist or docent to conduct classes, seminars or educational programs regarding the Willows. The proposed facility would have interpretive displays of the flora and fauna that make the Willows their home. Displays and materials would be available to educate the public about the importance of wetlands and their functions. Materials would also be available to educate the public about the need to protect these rare sites, protect the water that enters them and their ultimate role in protecting our coastal waters.

Current funding is insufficient to construct a nature center. The estimate cost for a 1,600 square foot facility is \$240,000. A site was chosen during Phase I, the study and planning phase of the project. The site is located near the southeast corner of the adjacent park. That site was chosen because of the proximity to water, sewers and electricity. The building, as well as the surrounding trails, would be handicap accessible.

In conjunction with protecting and enhancing the Willows as a natural resource, the City proposes to build the nature center with sustainable building technology where possible. These technologies use energy efficiently and preserve natural resources. The center would provide residents and patrons an opportunity to learn about technologies that could save energy in their own homes.

Re-vegetation

As was mentioned previously, certain areas in phase were not planted or planted but developed poorly. The City proposes to re-vegetate these areas with the appropriate native varieties to better compete with non-natives. This phase will include a weed control program to eliminate existing vegetation and an intense maintenance to ensure survival. The City, as part of the project, will require the contractor to maintain the area for two years and require a performance bond to ensure that the contractor complies with this portion of the project.

Non-native plant materials spread rapidly and crowd out native vegetation. This severely limits the habitat available for native species. It also depletes the ground water that native plants and animals need to survive in the dry, hot summers. Due to the urbanization around the Willows, the wetlands continually have water. The riparian forest benefits from the constant supply of water; it remains very healthy. The immediate surrounding upland area that would be re-vegetated would compliment the nearly pure wetland portion of the site. Materials that would attract and support wildlife would used to cover undeveloped areas.

Most of the current non-native population, like native materials, dries up during the hot summer months. The City is proposing to use ground covers and perennial plant materials that will remain green in these areas.

Project elements:

- Hand crews will apply an approved herbicide, either Roundup or Rodeo, if the season allows, to control the existing materials.
- At about two weeks, crews will cut the dead vegetation and remove the cuttings from the site. Some top soil may also be taken off site to reduce the seed bank.
- The areas will be hydro-seeded to further habitat restoration. The hydro seeding will provide a cover of natives, which will help to keep non-natives from re-colonizing these areas. This cover of natives will also keep the soil from washing into the Willows

The project will be overseen by the City of Gardena Public Works Department.

Maintenance of the project will be done in accordance with the "A Plan for the Willows" developed by Jones and Stokes Associates(March, 1999). The maintenance section of the plan details the methods and frequency of required to maintain the site at a satisfactory level.

Success of the project will be measured by the depth and level of community involvement that is generated by the City of Gardena as well as the lack of re-growth of invasive exotic plant materials. The City will maintain a photographic record of the site to document the progress from planning through annual ongoing monitoring. The City will determine the most critical area and measure performance from those points.

The cost for this program is estimated at \$20,000. The City and volunteers will also provide in-kind services to assist with this project.

Debris protection

The final element of the proposal includes the installation of devices to trap debris before it enters the wetlands. The wetlands is fed by one major 6 foot diameter drain and a smaller 36" drain. These two points are the main carriers of debris into the Willows. There are two smaller drainage pipes that feed the Willows. Traps will also be constructed at these locations. The City proposes to install traps or catch basins at their immediate entrances. Currently, only the existing native plant materials catch debris. Volunteers and City staff remove the debris on special clean-up days. The proposed traps would be of sufficient size to catch the majority of debris carried by the first winter rains.

The cost for this portion is estimated at \$40,000.

Project History and Development

The Willows and surrounding areas were an un-recognized resource within the City of Gardena. When the adjacent park was developed during the mid 1970s, the City had planned to expand the park and create a lake in what is now the wetlands. Local citizenry became aware of the City plans and petitioned the Army Corps of Engineers to declare the site a protected waterway. The declaration effectively stopped any thought of park development. In 1991, the City became aware that funds were available under Proposition A to protect and enhance natural resources. The City successfully applied for funding and acquired over 1.2 millions dollars to begin the restoration process. The plan prepared by Jones & Stokes Associates created a blueprint from which to improve the Willows. Jones & Stokes also acquired the appropriate permits from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the California Department of Fish and Game to implement the plan. The goal of the plan is to improve the health of the Willows, restore the location to a more natural condition and provide access to the site. Phase III is scheduled for completion by the end of the year. It is anticipated that the City will be able to open the site to visitors and begin promoting the Willows.

Supporting Partnerships

West Basin Municipal Water District is interested in partnering with the City of Gardena on this project. The District is also interested in providing reclaimed water to the site as appropriate for various enhancement opportunities. This would include the use of reclaimed water to flush the site during the dry months to remove contaminants and minimize the impact of the first rain's contamination.

The project is also supported by Tracy Drake of the Madrona Marsh in Torrance.

Applicable Experience

The City of Gardena has already constructed Phase II of this project and will soon be starting Phase III. The Public Works Department is requesting from the City, a permanent full-time employee to maintain the site. Upon completion of Phase III, the City will actively solicit volunteers to assist with maintenance. The Department currently maintains over 36 acres of park land. The Recreation and Human Service Department has been successful in acquiring volunteers to run many of its programs. The City of Gardena Public Work Department has sufficient experience with the maintenance required to successfully implement this project.

The City is committed to restoring and enhancing this jewel hidden in this vast urban sprawl.

PROJECT BUDGET

Table 2A: Estimated Project Budget

Project	Cost
Nature Center	\$240,000
Re-vegetation	\$20,000
Drainage Improvements	\$40,000
Total	\$300,000

Note: All proposed costs include design and engineering.

Table 2B: Estimated Funding Sources

No additional funding is available at this time.



Figure 1-1
Site Location



The Gardens Withins Westland
Prepared by
 James S. Stuber Associates, Inc.

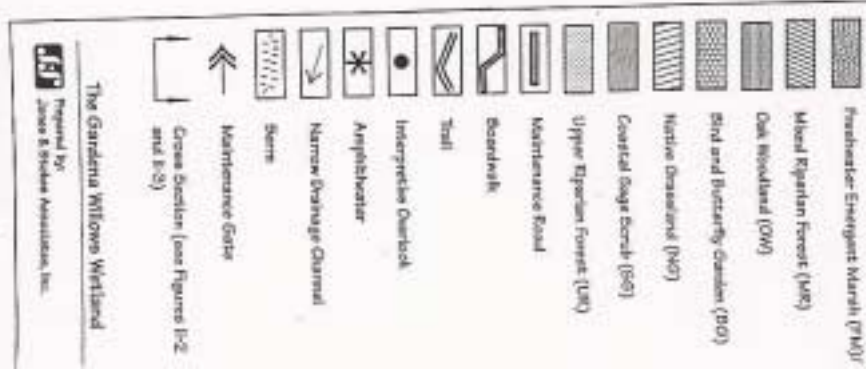
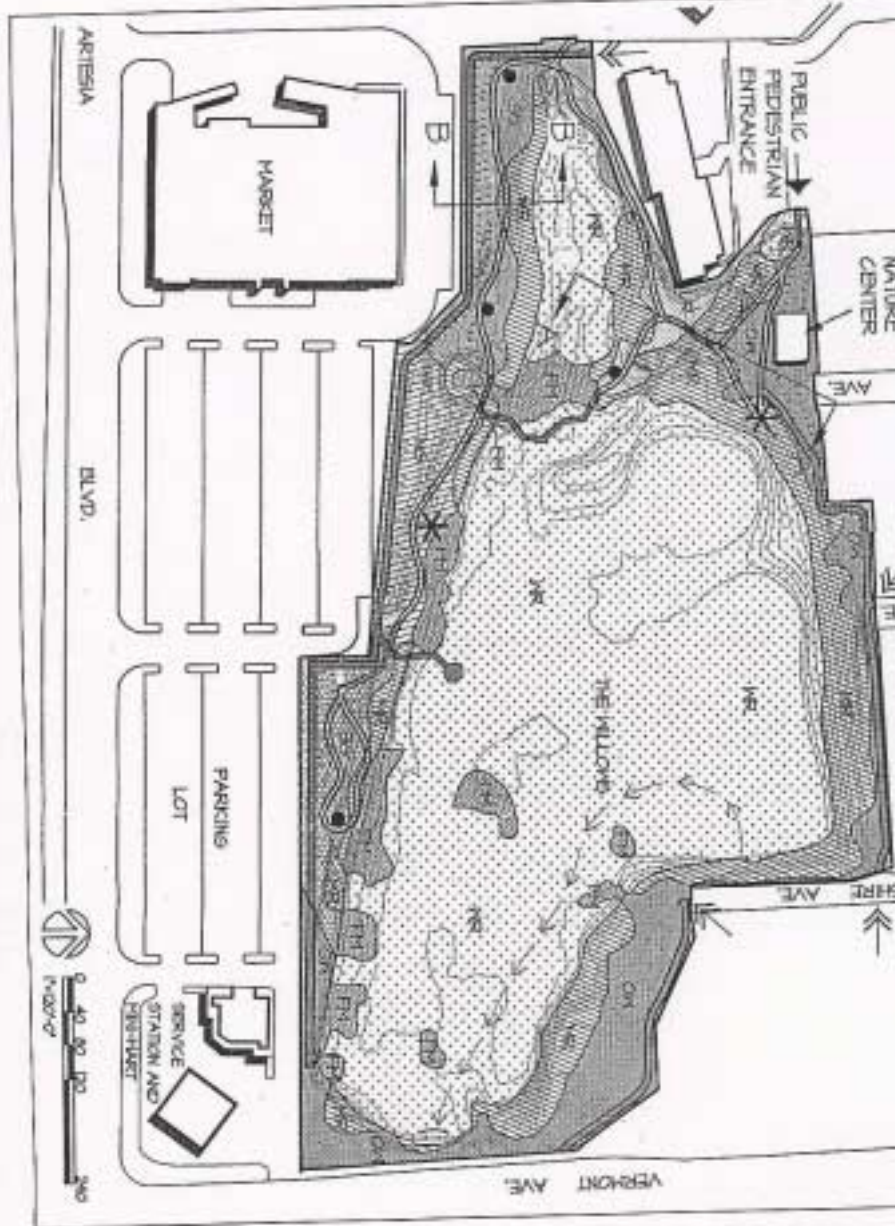




Figure I-2
Site Vicinity



Not to Scale

The Gardens Wetland

Prepared by
James S. Chisler Associates, Inc.