

D. Conservation

1. Goals and Opportunities

The Conservation Element of the General Plan is intended to provide for the conservation, development and utilization of natural resources such as water, rivers, soils, wildlife, etc. The Conservation Element overlaps provisions found in the Open Space, Land Use, Safety, Circulation and Utility Elements of the General Plan. It differs, however, from other elements in that it is almost exclusively oriented toward natural resources.

The City of Norwalk is a completely urbanized community, with limited natural resources. Still, there are existing resources which must be conserved. The following goals have been established to guide future conservation decisions:

- To protect natural resources from contamination.
- To provide adequate mitigation to ensure that development or any land use activity will not be harmful to the environment.

2. Natural Resources¹

The City of Norwalk is located within a 6,600 square mile coastal plain, bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the southwest and mountains around the rest of its perimeter, situated in a semi-permanent high pressure

¹Information provided by Environmental Science Associates.

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zone of the eastern Pacific, resulting in sea breezes with light average wind speeds.

Wind speed and direction is monitored in the City of La Habra, where winds blow from the west to the southwest about 36 percent of the time with mean wind speeds of 4.1 to 5.1 miles per hour (mph). Winds blow from the east-northeast about 31 percent of the time, with mean wind speeds of 1.8 to 2.3 mph. Southerly winds with mean wind speeds between 3.2 and 5.2 mph blow about 17 percent of the time. Northerly winds with mean wind speeds between 1.6 and 2.6 mph blow about 5 percent of the time. The average annual ambient air temperature in the Los Angeles region is 65 degrees fahrenheit. Ninety percent of the annual rainfall occurs from November to April. In downtown Los Angeles, average annual rainfall is about 14.9 inches, with a maximum of 31.3 inches and a minimum of 4.1 inches measured over an 83 year period.

Though urbanized in nature, the City of Norwalk still retains natural resources that must be preserved, including earth, air, water, and plant and animal life.

- *Earth* - Due to the flat topography, the City is not affected by avalanches, rockfalls, or landslides. The principal concern with regard to earth resources is soil contamination. By complying and supporting federal and state regulations with regard to soil contamination and clean up, Norwalk's earth resources can be preserved and improved.

One known area of soil contamination is the Federal Defense Fuel Supply Point located on

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the corner of Norwalk Boulevard and Excelsior Drive. The tank farm, which was constructed in the 1920's, and later taken over by the military in the 1950's, can store over 30 million gallons of highly volatile jet propulsion fuel in 12 above-ground storage tanks. The fuel can be piped underground from San Pedro Harbor to military bases in Southern California, Nevada, and Arizona. A portion of the land has also been leased to Santa Fe Pacific Pipeline Partners, Inc., a firm that specializes in the transport of fuel via pipelines.

Contamination at the site was first identified in the mid-1980's. Test results indicate that contaminants have been found up to 500 feet south of the facility. The Defense Department has provided test results that indicate that the tank farm does not pose an immediate health hazard, since carcinogens (cancer causing agents) are in areas too shallow to contaminate groundwater supplies, and too deep to affect residents. The clay layers below contaminated aquifers protect the drinking water aquifers, which are much deeper. The geology of the area changes near the City of Norwalk's northern boundary, however. The protective clay and silt layers become inconsistent, providing opportunities for contaminants to enter the drinking water aquifers.

In response to extensive efforts by citizens, Congressman Esteban Torres, and the City of Norwalk, the Defense Department and Santa Fe Pacific Pipeline Partners have commenced soil remediation activities including: drilling of

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wells to extract toxics from the soil and water; retrofitting of fuel storage tanks for earthquake safety; construction of leak prevention systems; relocation of tanker truck operations outside of Norwalk; and termination of fuel storage in five storage tanks.

A Restoration Advisory Board (RAB), comprised of residents, property owners and business owners in Norwalk, has been formed to monitor remediation activities. The City of Norwalk will continue to press for complete remediation of on and off-site contamination and eventual removal of the fuel storage tanks, in consideration of the surrounding residential neighborhood².

- *Air-* The air quality within Los Angeles County has been recognized as very poor. Emission sources include industries, power plants, motor vehicle traffic, and electrical power and natural gas consumption. Through support of regulations of the South Coast Air Quality Management District, improvement of traffic conditions within the community, encouragement of pedestrian and alternative modes of transportation, the air quality within the region can be improved.

- *Water-* The City produces a number of typical urban pollutants including oil, grease, rubber, metals, and hydrocarbons washed from paved surfaces, and herbicides, pesticides, and

²Source: Defense Fuel Supply Point Information Packet prepared by the City of Norwalk.

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fertilizer in landscaped areas. Water well sites, maintained by the various water companies, should be maintained in healthful conditions, and sources of ground water contamination should be properly controlled and eliminated. Approximately 98% of the City's water supply is provided by wells.

In addition to general water quality concerns, the San Gabriel River Flood Control Channel, which runs along the western boundary of the City of Norwalk, also serves as a water resource. The river is no longer in a natural state, but has been lined with concrete and is now part of the regional flood control system. The channel is maintained by the County of Los Angeles Flood Control District.

To protect waterways such as the San Gabriel River, in 1972 the Clean Water Act was amended to provide that the discharge of pollutants to waters of the United States from any point source was unlawful unless the discharge was in compliance with a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit. This permit is enforced by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board.

In addition to the San Gabriel River, any contamination of ground water sources by industrial or similar uses, including underground tank storage should be addressed through proper federal or state regulations.

- *Plant and Animal Life* - No unique, rare, or

endangered plant, animals, or other species have been spotted within the City of Norwalk. Typical animal species known to inhabit intensely urbanized areas include mammals, such as squirrels, rabbits, mice, gophers, rats, and domestic cats and dogs. Bird species may include American crow, black raven, scrub jay, house finch, morning dove, northern mockingbird, and European starling.

3. Objectives and Policies

Objectives

- To encourage efforts to reduce pollution.
- To encourage efforts to clean up contaminated earth, air, and water resources.

Policies

- Cooperate with Federal, State and regional agencies in efforts to reduce pollution.
- Prohibit discharge of pollutants in to the San Gabriel River Flood Control Channel.
- Promote public awareness of water pollution and means of prevention.
- Encourage recreational uses along the San Gabriel River Flood Control Channel.
- Implement provisions of the State of California Environmental Quality Act.

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- Support efforts to close the Defense Fuel Supply.
- Encourage the use of alternative energy sources, such as solar power.
- Encourage the use of drought-tolerant plant materials in compliance with the State of California Water Conservation in Landscaping Act.
- Minimize the amount of paved surfaces in new development to reduce the "urban heat island" effect, where temperatures in urban areas are increased due to reflection of heat.

4. Implementation Programs

- Establish programs to discourage waste disposal in City storm drain systems.
- Develop a public awareness program regarding storm water pollution.
- Inform developers of projects about possible need for an NPDES Permit.
- Cooperate with the County of Los Angeles in promoting development of biking, hiking and equestrian trails along the San Gabriel River Flood Control Channel.

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