

The Newscastle

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U.S. Army Corps
of Engineers
Los Angeles District



the Corps Environment

Corps of Engineers

Environmental Operating Principles

On March 26, 2002, during the dedication of the Davis Pond Fresh Water Diversion Project in Louisiana, LTG Robert Flowers announced the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Environmental Operating Principles to guide the Corps in all of its works.

Those principles are:

Strive to achieve environmental sustainability. An environment maintained in a healthy, diverse and sustainable condition is necessary to support life.

Recognize the interdependence of life and the physical environment. Proactively consider environmental consequences of Corps programs and act accordingly in all appropriate circumstances.

Seek balance and synergy among human development activities and natural systems by designing economic and environmental solutions that support and reinforce one another.

Continue to accept corporate responsibility and accountability under the law for activities and

decisions under our control that impact human health and welfare and the continued viability of natural systems.

Seeks ways and means to assess and mitigate cumulative impacts to the environment; bring systems approaches to the full life cycle of our processes and work.

Build and share an integrated scientific, economic, and social knowledge base that supports a greater understanding of the environment and impacts of our work.

Respect the views of individuals and groups interested in Corps activities, listen to them actively, and learn from their perspective in the search to find innovative win-win solutions to the nation's problems that also protect and enhance the environment.

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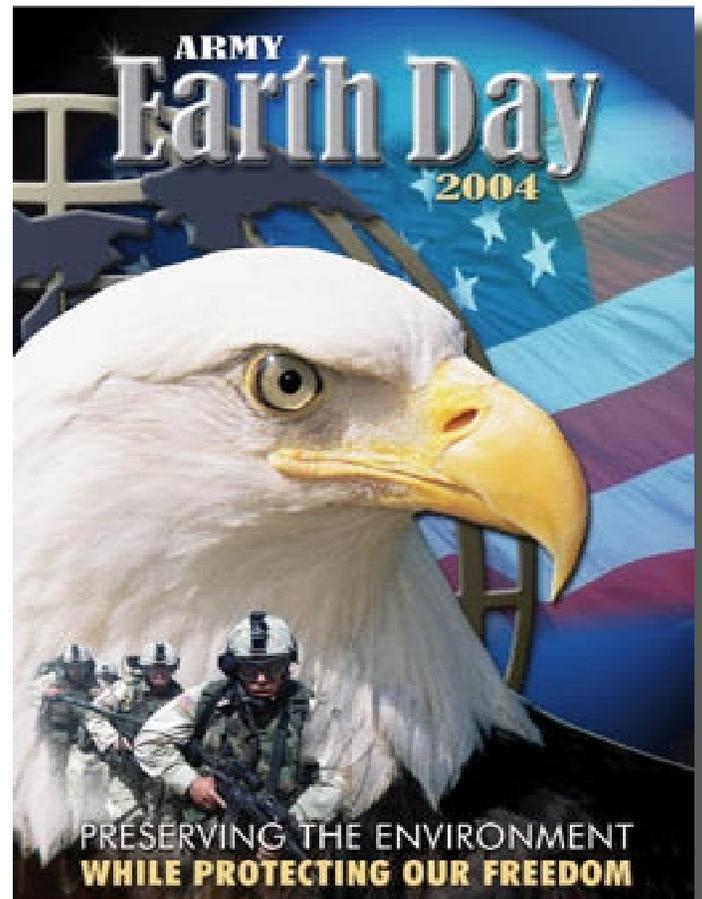
On the cover: *Ballona wetlands leading to the Pacific Ocean, pelicans, woolly stars and a hawk are among the beneficiaries of the Los Angeles District's environmental restoration and protection.*

Earth Day dawns again

You won't find the news on too many Green web sites, but world-famous Earth Day was founded by a U.S. Army veteran. And you can also bet that the Corps in general and the L.A. District in particular will get scant notice for their role in promoting the environmental holiday.

"People don't really make the connection," says Carvel Bass, an ecologist in the District's Operations Branch. "But the Corps is deeply involved with local parklands, rivers and lakes."

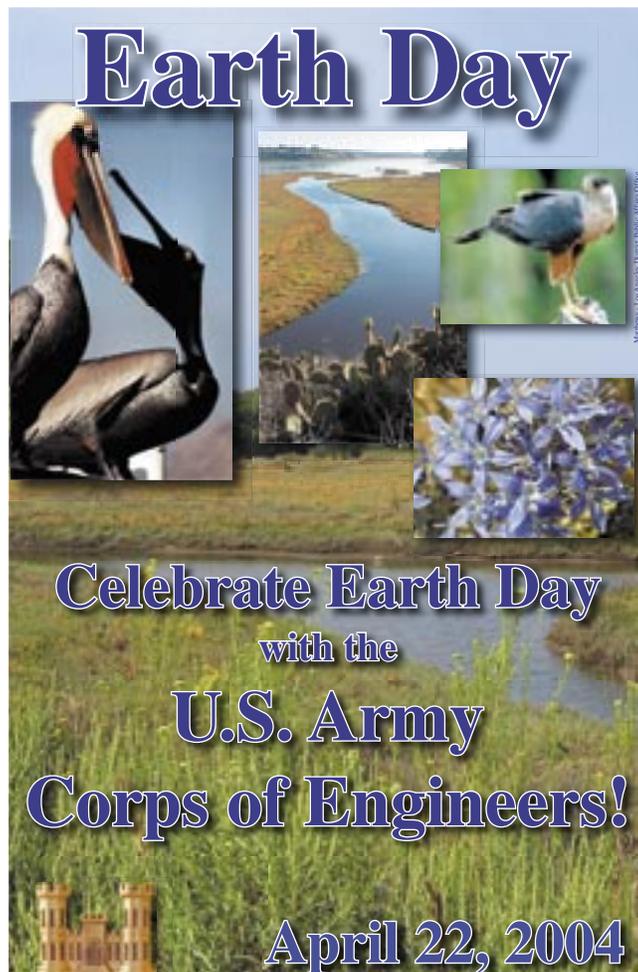
Former Sen. Gaylord Nelson, who was a World War II Army lieutenant for four years in the Pacific Theater, is generally credited with inspiring and organizing the first Earth Day in April 1970. "For years prior to Earth Day it had been troubling me that the critical matter of the state of our environment was simply a 'non-issue' to the politics



of our country," Nelson told the U.S. Army Environmental Center public affairs team last year. "It was clear that until we somehow got this matter into the political arena, until it became part of the national political dialogue, not much would ever be achieved."

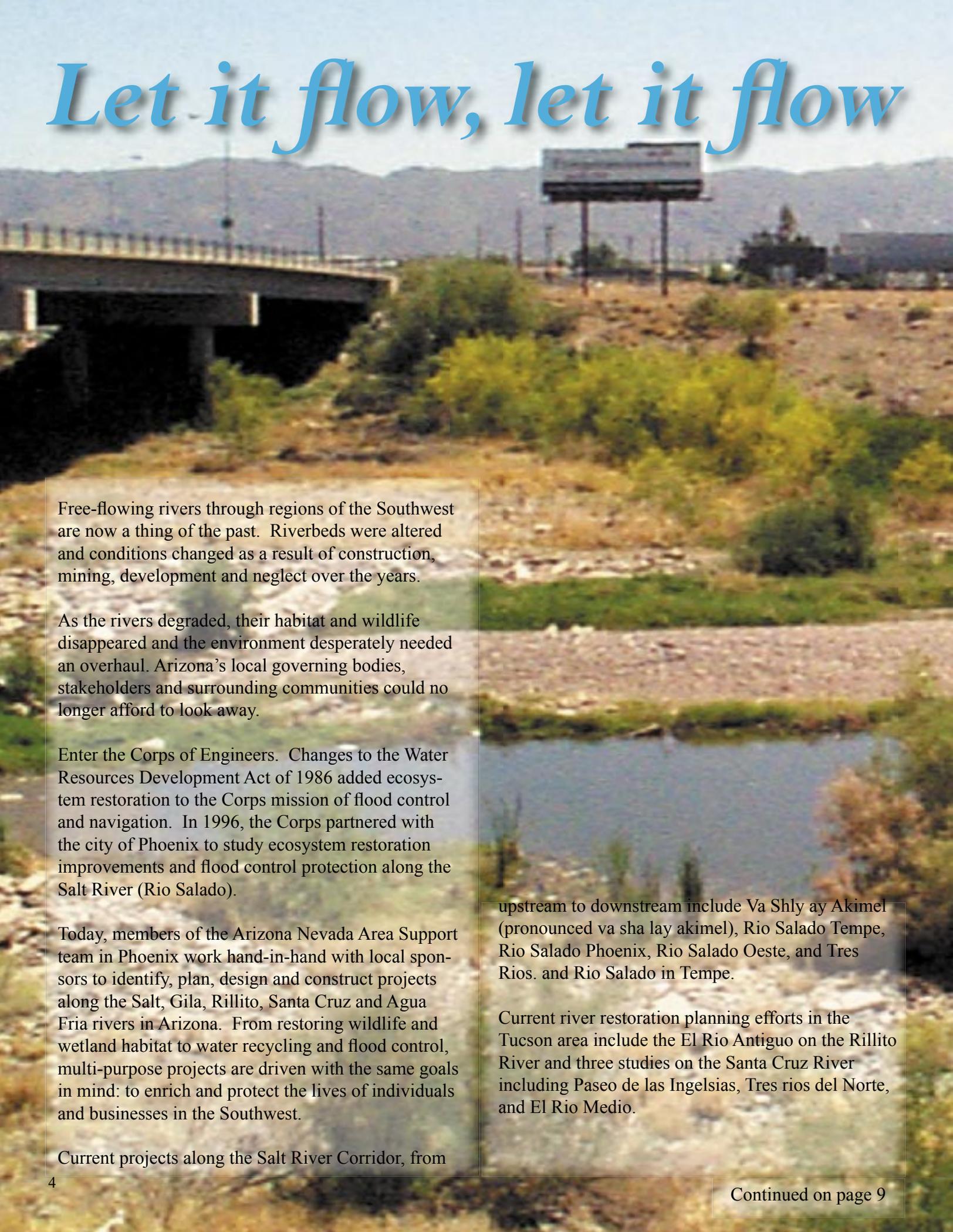
(Some Californians might dispute Nelson's claim. Peter Tamaras, head of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1970, is said to have asked John McConnell to write an "Earth Day Proclamation," which San Francisco Mayor Joseph Alioto issued March, 1, 1970.)

Whatever the origins, Earth Day has become a global phenomenon, with an estimated half-billion people participating in events and activities related to it each year. Over the decades, the District's team members have eagerly embraced Earth Day and spread the Corps' gospel of seven environmental principles, as announced by LTG Flowers in his 2002 Earth Day announcement. "We are making a difference for the nation," he concluded.



The posters on this page are available by request at the District Public Affairs Office, suite 980.

Let it flow, let it flow



Free-flowing rivers through regions of the Southwest are now a thing of the past. Riverbeds were altered and conditions changed as a result of construction, mining, development and neglect over the years.

As the rivers degraded, their habitat and wildlife disappeared and the environment desperately needed an overhaul. Arizona's local governing bodies, stakeholders and surrounding communities could no longer afford to look away.

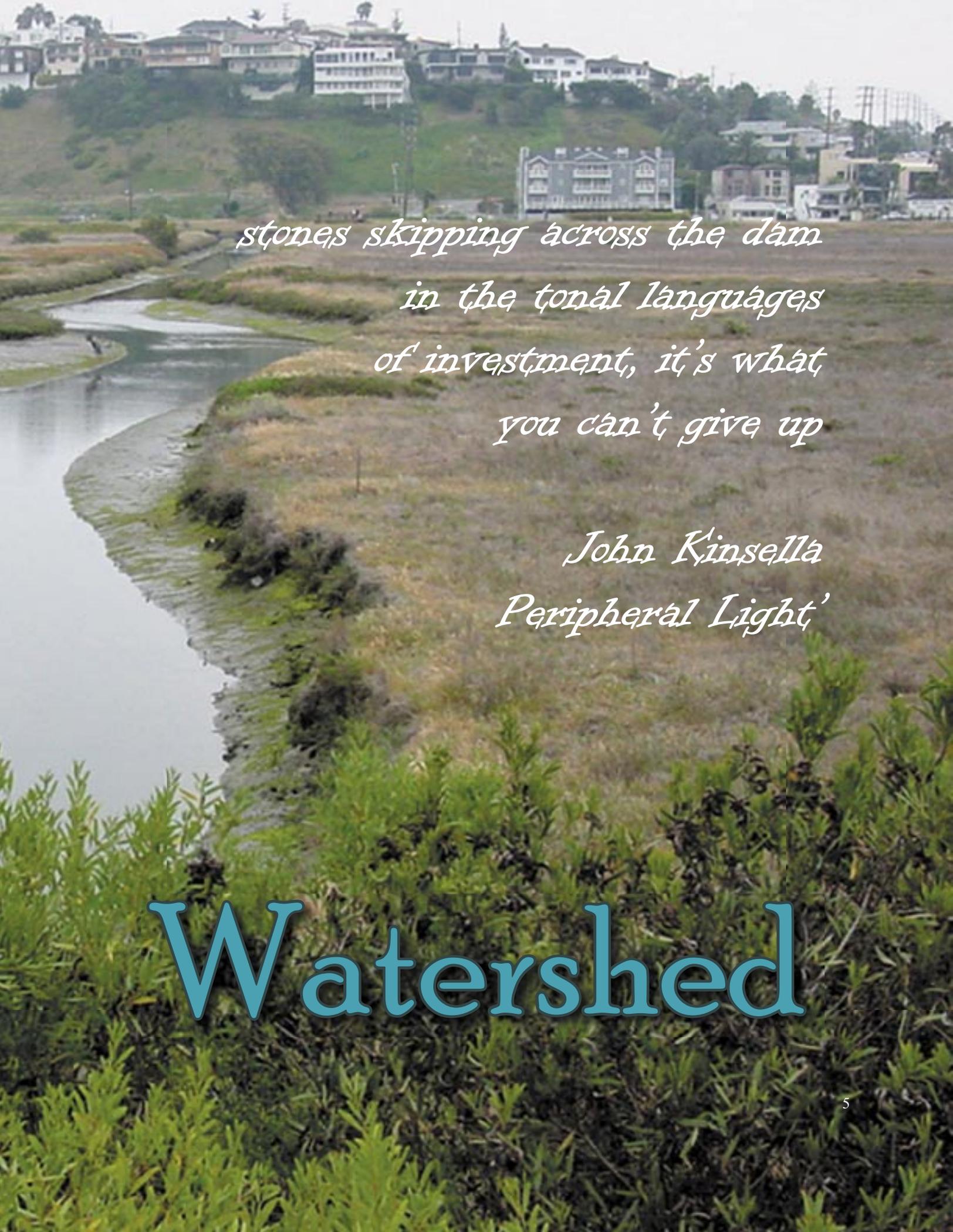
Enter the Corps of Engineers. Changes to the Water Resources Development Act of 1986 added ecosystem restoration to the Corps mission of flood control and navigation. In 1996, the Corps partnered with the city of Phoenix to study ecosystem restoration improvements and flood control protection along the Salt River (Rio Salado).

Today, members of the Arizona Nevada Area Support team in Phoenix work hand-in-hand with local sponsors to identify, plan, design and construct projects along the Salt, Gila, Rillito, Santa Cruz and Agua Fria rivers in Arizona. From restoring wildlife and wetland habitat to water recycling and flood control, multi-purpose projects are driven with the same goals in mind: to enrich and protect the lives of individuals and businesses in the Southwest.

Current projects along the Salt River Corridor, from

upstream to downstream include Va Shly ay Akimel (pronounced va sha lay akimel), Rio Salado Tempe, Rio Salado Phoenix, Rio Salado Oeste, and Tres Rios. and Rio Salado in Tempe.

Current river restoration planning efforts in the Tucson area include the El Rio Antiguo on the Rillito River and three studies on the Santa Cruz River including Paseo de las Ingelsias, Tres rios del Norte, and El Rio Medio.

A landscape photograph showing a river winding through a field. In the background, there are several houses built on a hillside. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, cursive font.

*stones skipping across the dam
in the tonal languages
of investment, it's what
you can't give up*

*John Kinsella
Peripheral Light'*

Watershed

By Mike Tharp

Watershed.

Both meanings apply to the District's visionary strategy for land and resource management:

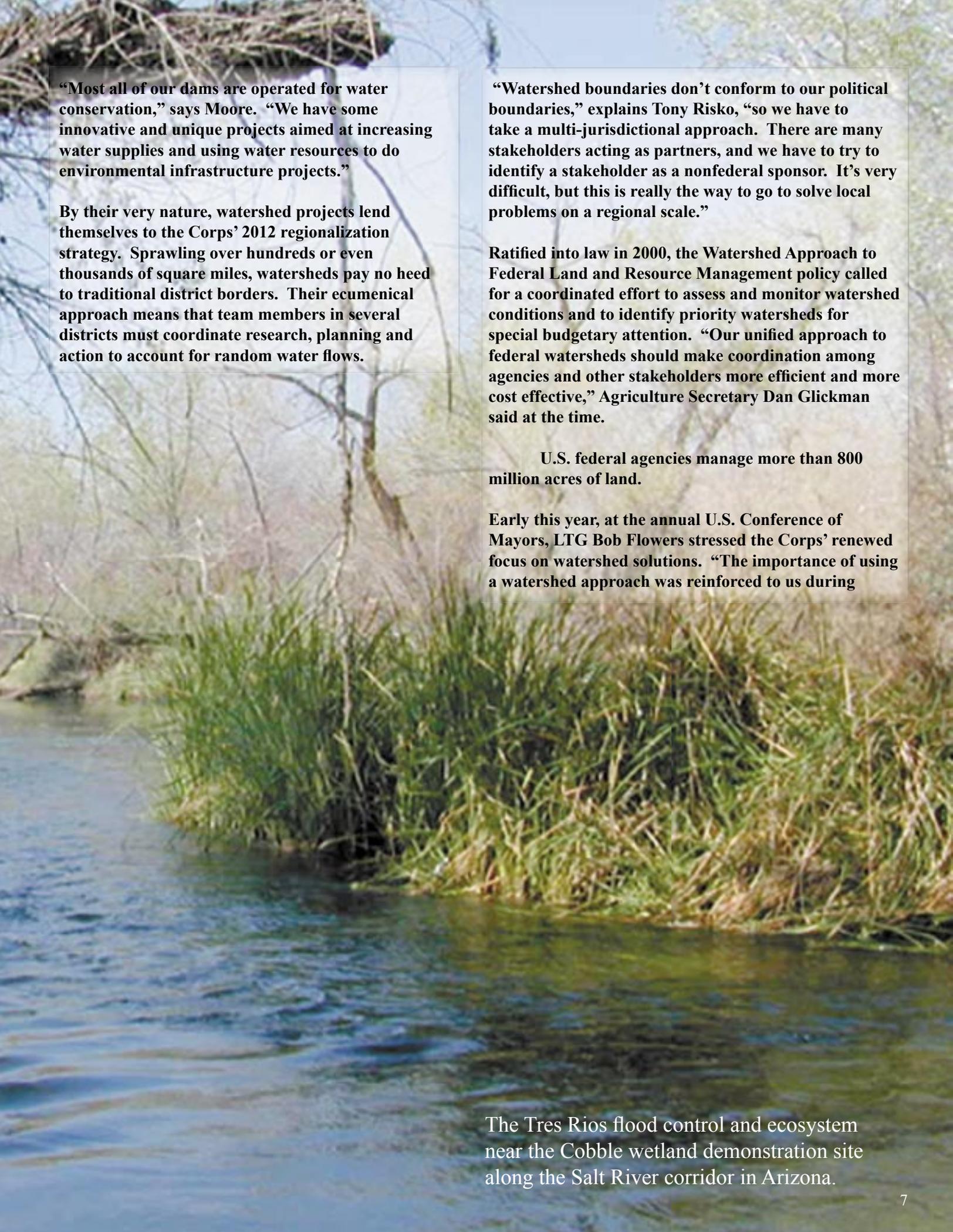
- The area drained by a river, stream, etc.
- A point of division, as between two periods of history.

Mirroring innovative projects in a handful of other states, the District's efforts are attracting widespread attention. Lower Ballona Creek's ecosystem restoration, tearing down the Matilija Dam to revive endangered trout and studies to deal with flood control and habitat recovery along the Santa Clara watershed are just a few of the projects illustrating a river change in outlook.

The impetus? Drought, or at least declining water supplies, occurring across one of the fastest-growing and thirstiest regions in America. Water for Los Angeles District stakeholders' faucets historically has flowed from the meandering, 1,470-mile-long Colorado River or from northern California's Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, via the California Aqueduct.

Today, competition for supplies from both sources has become more intense. As a result, "we've gone beyond traditional thinking of building a dam to store water," says Brian Moore, chief of the Programs and Project Management Division (PPMD). "Now we've got to find new ways to create water supplies."

District team members, commercial and environmental groups, residents and recreational enthusiasts have embraced the new approach. "The Corps, which primarily is known for construction projects that manage rivers, has found a new role in helping bring rivers back to their natural states," the Los Angeles Times reported in February.



“Most all of our dams are operated for water conservation,” says Moore. “We have some innovative and unique projects aimed at increasing water supplies and using water resources to do environmental infrastructure projects.”

By their very nature, watershed projects lend themselves to the Corps’ 2012 regionalization strategy. Sprawling over hundreds or even thousands of square miles, watersheds pay no heed to traditional district borders. Their ecumenical approach means that team members in several districts must coordinate research, planning and action to account for random water flows.

“Watershed boundaries don’t conform to our political boundaries,” explains Tony Risko, “so we have to take a multi-jurisdictional approach. There are many stakeholders acting as partners, and we have to try to identify a stakeholder as a nonfederal sponsor. It’s very difficult, but this is really the way to go to solve local problems on a regional scale.”

Ratified into law in 2000, the Watershed Approach to Federal Land and Resource Management policy called for a coordinated effort to assess and monitor watershed conditions and to identify priority watersheds for special budgetary attention. “Our unified approach to federal watersheds should make coordination among agencies and other stakeholders more efficient and more cost effective,” Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said at the time.

U.S. federal agencies manage more than 800 million acres of land.

Early this year, at the annual U.S. Conference of Mayors, LTG Bob Flowers stressed the Corps’ renewed focus on watershed solutions. “The importance of using a watershed approach was reinforced to us during

The Tres Rios flood control and ecosystem near the Cobble wetland demonstration site along the Salt River corridor in Arizona.

three years of listening sessions around the country,” he said. “In the past, when our nation was sparsely populated, single projects worked. In 1904, the United States population was about 82 million. Today, it is over 292 million. Not only is our population growing, it is growing fastest where there is already competition for available water supplies. We are finding that solving a problem in one location now can create problems for another area.”

He cited, for example, large-scale ecosystem restoration projects in the Everglades and Louisiana’s “shrinking coastal wetlands.” And recognizing the matrix between USACE 2012 and watersheds, the Chief Engineer added, “We are restructuring the Corps. Our divisions and districts are already organized along watersheds. But now we are tearing away stovepipes and the sequential layers of review that cause project delays.”

That process was dramatically illustrated in late February when explosives experts, under Corps direction, blew a huge hole in the Embrey Dam at Fredericksburg, Va. The largest of more than a hundred dams that have been removed in the past five years, Embrey represented the watershed approach with its promise of more fishing, boating and other recreational activities along ecologically restored banks.

The Virginia dam’s western doppelganger is Matilija Dam near Ojai, Calif., almost due north of Los Angeles. With almost no resistance, a diverse group of stakeholders is proceeding with plans to remove the 56-year-old structure, built originally for flood control. It would become the largest dam in America to be torn down and would restore, advocates say, a significant percentage of the region’s steelhead trout population. Estimated cost is around \$100 million, and project supporters hope the Corps can come up with much of the funding.

Several other District projects are authorized under Section 219 of the 1996 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). That section allows the District to provide infrastructure, planning and design when an area is specified under the act. Recently, it has been applied to construction at the Harbor South Bay water recycling project and the Cambria seawater desalination project, to design studies for perchlorate in Santa Clarita and for construction at the North Valley Regional Water Infrastructure project in Lancaster.

PPMD Deputy Chief Dan Young describes how Section 219 works in practice: “We don’t want you, the Corps of Engineers, to go out and do more work—we want you to farm this out and get it from private industry, which includes planning and design too.”

Other projects that go beyond the old flood-control syndrome include:

- possibly taking down the Rindge Dam in Malibu to promote estuary restoration;
- a Lower Santa Ana River Watershed study that is examining such issues as why some Southland beaches have been closed by bacterial contamination;
- a wetlands component in the huge Tres Rios project in Arizona;
- studies at Hansen, Santa Fe, Whittier Narrows and 7 Oaks Dams exploring the possibilities of water recharging;
- a reconnaissance report on the Lower Ballona Creek Watershed ecosystem restoration project.

“From our own facilities, we are actually increasing water supplies and addressing water quality through these environmental restoration projects,” Moore says.

One former local sponsor responsible for Orange County’s total immersion in the watershed approach is Larry Paul. Now with Tetra Tech Inc. in Irvine, Paul was for 31 years an Orange County official and worked closely with Risko and other District team members on dozens of projects and studies. “It’s because of them that local efforts have survived,” he says of the District people. “There are a lot of folks there with vision, who can see over the horizon.”

Noting that Newport Beach Mayor Tom Ridgeway was “even as we speak” in Washington, D.C., urging Sen. Diane Feinstein to approve more money for the Upper Newport Bay project, Paul praises “a lot of trust back and forth” among county officials and the District. “Our people ended up going to your people’s weddings; I have Tony’s (Risko’s) cell numbers memorized,” he adds. “The Corps was optimistic and actively engaged. We just kept going to see what would happen.”

What happened, and is happening, marks a watershed.

Let it flow continued from page 4

The Rio Salado project is located in the City of Phoenix between I-10 and 19th Ave. and in the City of Tempe, along 1.3 miles of the Indian Bend Wash and portions of the Salt River. The project addresses flood control issues, water quality and ecosystem restoration.

Cattails and orioles are among the wildlife beneficiaries of the project.



The Tres Rios project is located southwest of Phoenix at the confluence of the Salt, Gila and Agua Fria Rivers. It is a multi-purpose project that addresses flood control and environmental restoration using treated waste from a regional treatment plant. Other features include the restoration of riparian and wetland habitat and recreational development including hiking trails, comfort stations and ramadas.



Severe wave action displaced rocks near the middle of the breakwater, pushing several through to the harbor side (left side of photo).

Central Coast Quake

Rocks

Breakwater

When the San Simeon Earthquake hit the California central coast it displaced numerous rocks from the head of the Port San Luis Harbor breakwater.



Story and Photos by Jay Field

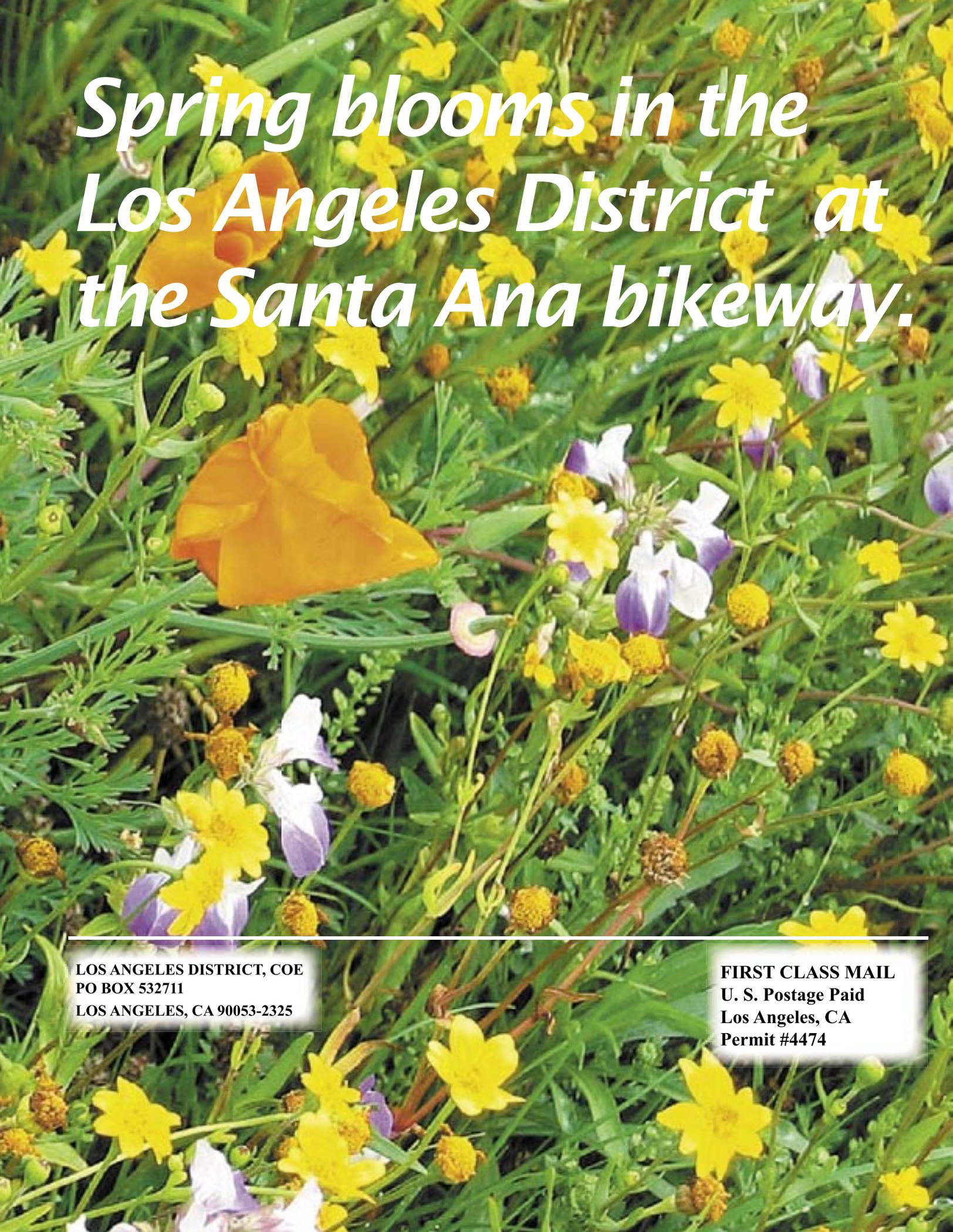
The San Simeon Earthquake on Dec. 22, 2003 was the strongest to hit the central coast of California since 1927, damaging the breakwater protecting the Port San Luis Harbor with destructive wave action. Keith Ayers, Los Angeles District navigation project manager, recently conducted an initial assessment of the damaged breakwater. Using aerial photos and side-scan sonar, surveyors determined approximately 50 feet of the stone rubble structure had broken apart. Ayers said the damage at the head of the breakwater might cost about \$4 million to repair. Additional damage, not related to the earthquake, was noted near the middle of the offshore barrier and will be included in the repair project, he said. The District coastal engineering section is preparing plans and specifications for a repair contract.



*Above:
The Port San Luis Harbor breakwater suffered an estimated \$4 million in damage from the San Simeon Earthquake and recent storm activity.*

*Left:
The Port San Luis Harbor breakwater protects anchored boats from destructive wave action.*





*Spring blooms in the
Los Angeles District at
the Santa Ana bikeway.*

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