LA River Investigation

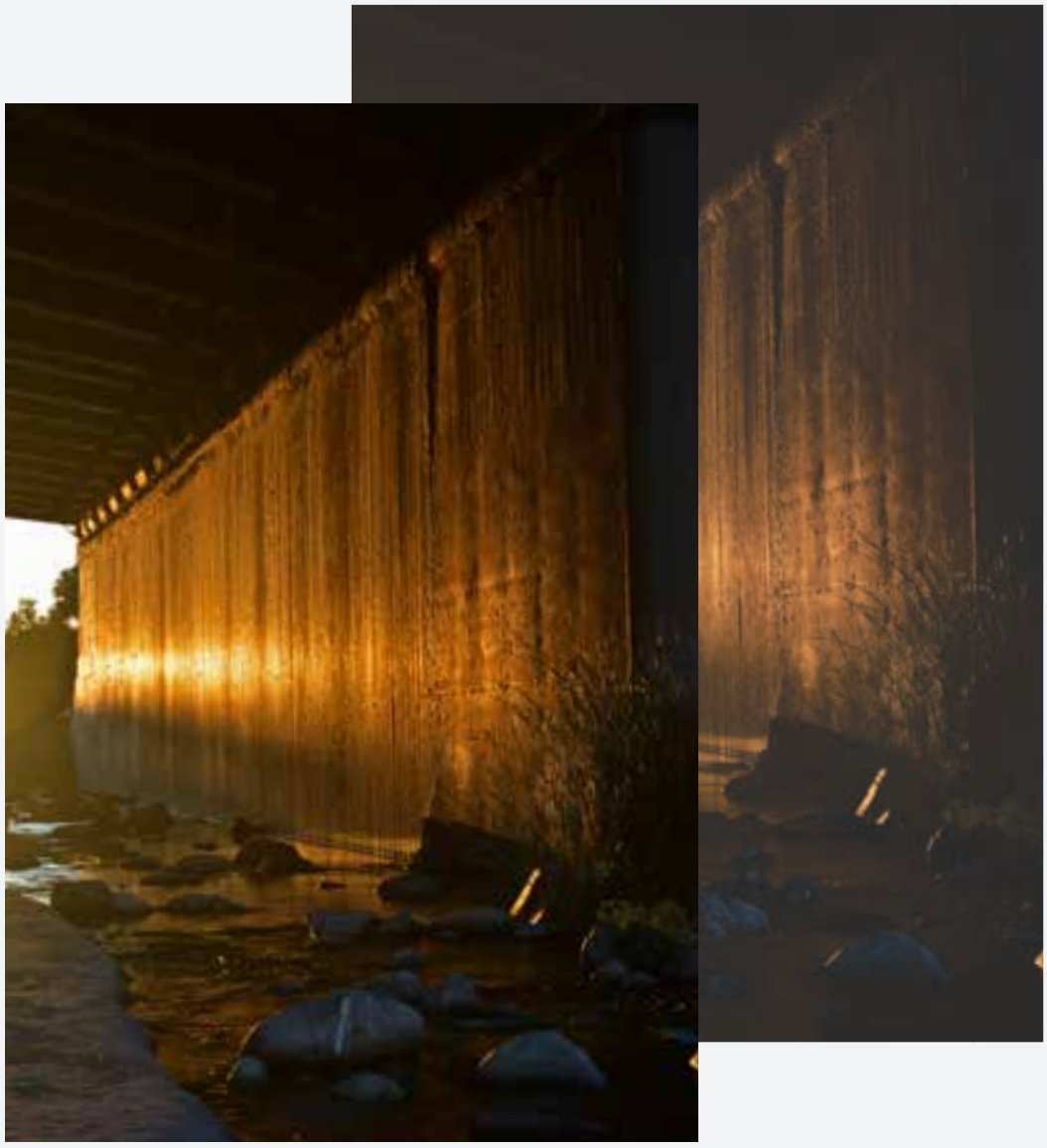
51

The LA River begins in the San Fernando Valley and stretches to the Pacific Ocean.

51 miles

17 cities

The river served as a primary water source from 1781 until 1938, when the river flooded.



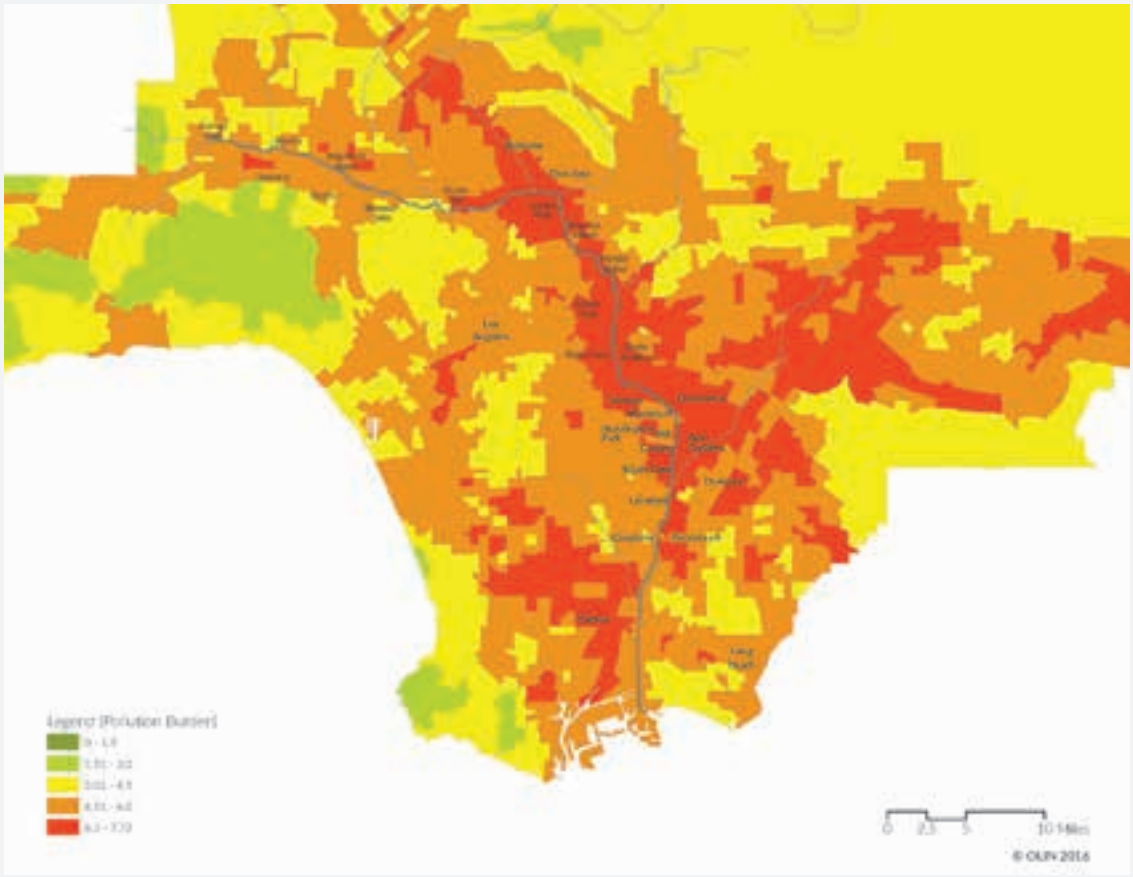
The Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board imposed a bacteria "Total Maximum Daily Load" for the river. Contributors of harmful bacteria along the river include urban runoff, leaks and flows from wastewater collection systems, "illicit connections" and poorly operating septic systems. The water in the river is essentially all industrial and residential discharge. Bacteria sources are noted as pets, horses and human waste. A serious threat is posed on those who come into direct contact with the water.

DROUGHT

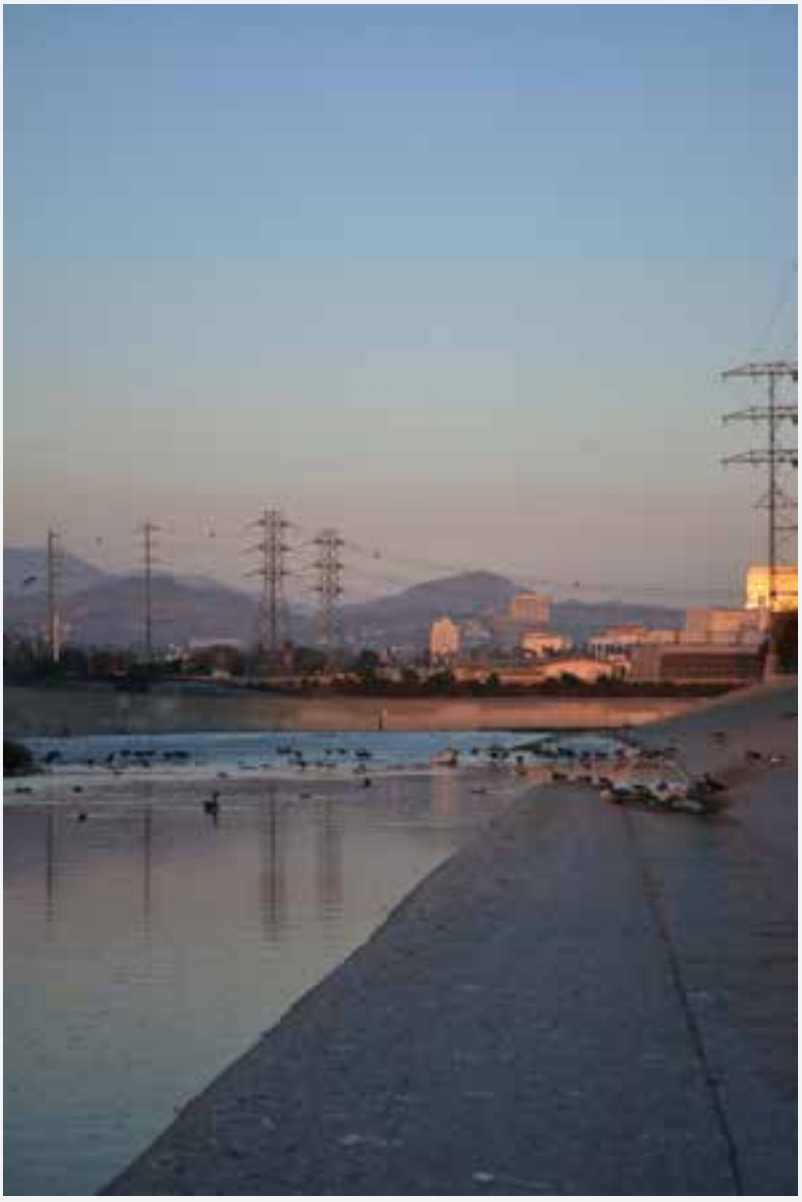
The LA River was once a thriving water source. It was populated by huge amounts of steelhead trout, which are now endangered, and the surrounding forest areas were home to various species of wildlife. After a serious flood in 1938, the river was paved over with concrete, leaving only a small trickle of water, and the river was mostly dry for about nine months in the 1950s. When Los Angeles experiences dry spells, as it often does, the river is fed wastewater discharged from three wastewater treatment plants in the area (hence the danger of taking a swim in the LA River).

In 2016, the Los Angeles City Council adopted the LA River restoration project, which proposed restoring 11 miles of the LA River from Griffith Park to downtown Los Angeles. The goal is to maintain existing levels of flood risk management while creating and reestablishing a freshwater marsh habitat to support local populations of wildlife. The team aims to further opportunities for connectivity to nearby ecological zones: the Santa Monica Mountains, Verdugo Hills, Elysian Hills, and the San Gabriel Mountains. The restoration project indludes reintroducing ecological and physical processes to the area that will reconnect the river to historic floodplains, increase infiltration, and improve water quality.

There is a chance that the LA River can make a comeback and return to a somewhat lucious state but at the rapidly increasing rate of human traffic on the planet, it is doubtful that the river will ever thrive as it once did. The perpetual warming of the planet causes repeated droughts in the Los Angeles and Southern California area, and pollution from human activity makes it difficult to maintain a clean and inhabitable river.



Pictured here is a graphic produced by the LA River Index that indicates the water quality (level of pollution in the river water) in various areas of LA as of 2016.



by Elena Saviano