

Just Wondering About

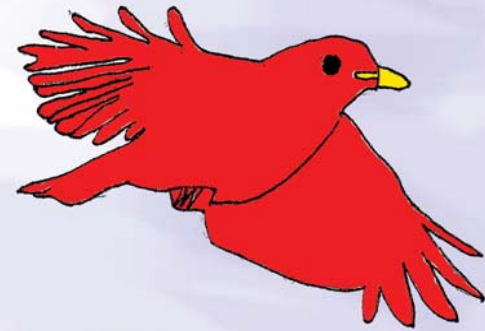
P_(ublic) P_(olicy) in the San
Diego River



Will Harris

I hear birds chirping in the trees behind me, long grass flowing out of the moist mud/sand ground. I feel the warm breeze flowing creating a peaceful aroma. The clean, fresh river flows right down through the defined valley in a zig zaggy shape. Unfortunately that's my television.

I then get in my car to go to school. I travel on highway 8 looking over into the canyon and see the river, barely alive with old dishwashers, trash and other things that are unnatural. As I was seeing this I was wondering how it got to being this polluted. The level of pollution made me feel uneasy



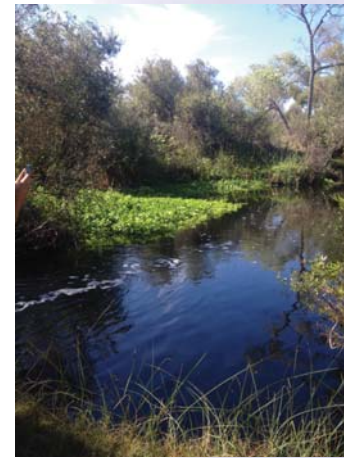
because I'm a person who likes to get out into the wild and explore but the river has so much trash that it makes me feel uncomfortable.

When most people think of San Diego you think of a coastline city that is always sunny and has horrible sports teams, you don't think of it as a river city. That's because it barely has a river, well at least now. Due to pollution, lack of care, and the horrible drought. So you may be asking yourself, why care about the river? The river is depleting at an alarming



councilwoman Valerie Stallings got involved and started the cleanup. The article explained how there was piles of trash sometimes 20-30 feet wide filled with paper, human waste, needles and anything else to infinity and beyond. You can imagine how the river was feeling, more than one hundred people bathing and defecating in it each and every day. Overall they removed a total of 800,000 pounds of trash which is about 27 fully grown asian elephants.

I really want to research this topic further because I want to know more about what's happening around the world surrounding me and I am a outdoors person who has always found nature interesting. I also always hear how nature is depleting and getting destroyed, but I have always wondered if in the future we'll look back and tell our children how we almost destroyed mother nature instead of explaining what being in nature felt.



whose houses got devalued. Unfortunately with every plan there is a flaw. What Bell did not plan for was that Mission Valley is at the heart of San Diego.

Now you may be asking yourself what have we done already that has been a successful part in helping the river. This actually happened in the same place we visited in Mission Valley. The clean-up actually started out as a

police project. In the same area as the park is today there used to be over 100 homeless people. They were well organized who actually had a mayor and had built “homes” that were sometimes two stories high. They were separated into two groups: on the north side was the the people who did drugs while the people on the south side who didn’t. This is why the police was helping out. They brought in their homeless outreach program and help relocated the homeless population. Later



rate and it doesn’t help us in any way. Well that’s not true. The San Diego river leads straight to the ocean and the river helps water move which overall filters the ocean. Also it would be a nice place to bring your kids. Imagine walking through the beautiful canyons full of trees having your kids play in the non polluted happy and vibrant river. Exploring the amazing assortment of plants and animals thriving in their new and natural environment because of the restored river. A world where the air is clean, you don’t have to worry about what pollutants are in fish you eat. This would provide countless number of jobs, the economy would be booming and San Diego would be a role model for the United States. It’s like turning water into wine, but turning dirty water into clean water. San Diego is known as a beach city, a city with a world famous zoo, but imagine the San Diego of the future: a river city.



I recently had the pleasure of visiting the river with Bob from the San Diego River Foundation and we looked at Mission Valley floodplain the natural non-cement floodplain like Los Angeles has. As we were hiking through the trails right outside the YMCA I felt like I was in a home away from home. As Dorothy from The Wizard of Oz once said “There’s no place like home.” Bob said that they had recently restored the area which was one of the most polluted parts of the river. Even though they took a bunch of trash, there was still a long way to go. During our visit Bob took a plunge in the river to see what type of benthic macroinvertebrates were at the bottom of the river.

We did this because these larvae would tell us how clean the water was. This was represented on a scale from one to nine, one being very good and nine being very bad. Unfortunately we mostly only found sevens with a few six and eights.

Earlier that week we read an article called There is no



San Diego River which was published in 2008 by the San Diego Reader. In this article it talks about Jim Bell who is an eco-designer and ran for mayor of San Diego in 2004. Jim Bell says, “You can restrict the river or you restrict the humans.” This means we need to limit our access to the river. Bell goes on to say that his plan was to prohibit any further development in the floodplain (Mission Valley) meaning you can still repair your property but you can’t add on or build new things there. Because of this the houses in the floodplain go down in value because who wants to live in a house that is going to wear away in a couple of years. Then, after everyone moves out from the floodplain the house’s that border the floodplain go up in value because they now have a very nice new canyon in front of them which you can hike, explore, and learn about the environment. So, if these houses where one million dollars before now they are two million just because of the nice new environment that surrounds it. But, this extra million dollars was unearned by the homeowners along the rim of the floodplain so you can take a percent of that money from when they decide to sell their house and use that to fund the people

