

NEWS RELEASE



SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

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Conservancy Dedicates First Los Angeles River Park In San Fernando Valley

Richard Lillard Outdoor Classroom will make restored natural areas along the Los Angeles River usable and accessible to valley residents and schoolchildren

Studio City—The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) announced today the opening of the Richard Lillard Outdoor Classroom on the County flood plain along the Los Angeles River between Coldwater Canyon and Fulton Avenue in Studio City. The first of many projects planned by the Conservancy along the river's edge in the San Fernando Valley, the Lillard Outdoor Classroom includes restoration of the natural areas, interpretive displays, an outdoor amphitheater, native riparian landscaping, and irrigation.

Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, who was instrumental in attaining Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space Rivers and Streams Grant (Proposition A) funding for the \$250,000 neighborhood and environmental enhancement project, was on hand to dedicate the new park. "This new facility will offer students and other visitors an entertaining and informative opportunity to learn about and better appreciate one of our most unique environmental assets in urban Los Angeles," Yaroslavsky said. The California Resources Agency River Parkway (Proposition 204) program also contributed to the project.

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The Studio City park has long been informally used for dog walking and jogging by the neighborhood surrounding it. The Conservancy improved access to the trails by adding stairs, and improving the pathways. At the ceremony, the non-profit Village Gardeners, who for years have volunteered to clear vegetation, plant flowers and clean the river bank in the area, were presented with a key to a newly-built shed to house their gardening supplies. It was the Village Gardeners—who have been committed to maintaining the flood plain for many years—who originally envisioned the parkland potential of the easement next to the river. Local schools, including nearby Dixie Canyon Elementary, will now be able to use the facility to learn about the natural history and ecology of the river.

“Realizing the recreational and educational potential of the Los Angeles River is one of the most exciting movements in Southern California today,” said Joseph T. Edmiston, Executive Director of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. “The Lillard Outdoor Classroom exemplifies the potential of strong community support and local and State government working together to bring more parks and nature to our neighborhoods.”

The park is named for Richard Lillard, one of Los Angeles' first great ecologists, who had a strong influence on the creation of the Friends of the Los Angeles River. Mr. Lillard was the author of *Eden in Jeopardy, Man's Prodigal Meddling with his Environment: the Southern California Experience*, and helped lead the fight against converting Mulholland Drive into a freeway. He was also one of the first to propose a regional park in the Santa Monica Mountains to permanently preserve open space.

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority are dedicated to the preservation and acquisition of open space and parkland throughout Southern California.

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