



Hands across the dam at the “too big dig.” Dogs, horses, kids and people of all ages formed a chain across the top of Pasadena’s Devil’s Gate Dam on Saturday, December 14 to protest an LA County sediment removal plan that some believe could damage, possibly irreparably, the Hahamongna Watershed Park. Devil’s Gate Dam overlooks the roughly 300-acre park that is home to thousands of trees and plants, as well as many hiking and equestrian trails, the nation’s first Frisbee golf course, Tom Sawyer Kid’s Camp, Move A Child Higher (autism and disabilities rehabilitation center) and the Rose Bowl Riders Equestrian Center. (Photo by Lori Paul)

ASF urges “slow, sustainable” sediment removal program

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It was built to prevent floods in the Arroyo Seco, but over its 93-year history Devil’s Gate Dam has accumulated massive amounts of sand, rock and sediment. Now the aging dam could bring a flood of diesel trucks and air pollution into the communities of West Pasadena, Altadena and La Canada-Flintridge.

In October the LA County Flood Control District (LACFCD) released a draft environmental impact report (EIR) evaluating its plan to remove as much as 4 million cubic yards (MCY) of sediment beginning in 2015. LACFCD’s plan is to remove 7,650 cubic yards per day over a three- to five-year period with 425 double-bed diesel truck trips in and out of Hahamongna, six days of the week. Massive earth-moving equipment will scoop up sediment and vegetation and dump it into a long line of waiting trucks.

The scraping and trucking will take an enormous toll on the recreational uses and rich riparian habitat in Hahamongna Watershed Park, the neighborhoods around it and on the freeway along the route to the landfill in Irwindale.

Other casualties will include air quality throughout the region, the safety of surrounding schools, road conditions, and the pocketbooks of Los Angeles County taxpayers, who will foot the bill for the \$100 million project. While this “plan” might temporarily increase the capacity of the reservoir, it will not solve the problem because sediment will keep flowing into the basin.

There is a sensible, sustainable way to manage sediment in Devil’s Gate Reservoir, which the Arroyo Seco Foundation has developed with stakeholders and the communities affected.

We call it the *Slow Program*. Our solution would maintain flood protection for

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downstream communities, reduce negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods, and take advantage of the Arroyo Seco’s natural ability to transport sediment. It would also protect the rich habitat and recreational opportunities in Hahamongna Watershed Park.



This plan involves four key elements: timing, method, the permanent footprint and the neighborhood impacts of sediment removal:

- **Go slow.** LACFCD has not provided any direct evidence of an immediate flood threat to the Arroyo Seco downstream of the dam. Their records reveal that the dam has stored greater amounts of sediment in the past and currently still has about 47% capacity. With a low probability of a sediment flow similar to the two years after the Station Fire, there is no need to remove 4 MCY in five years. A 20-year project will minimize all negative environmental impacts. Instead of removing 1 MCY each year, LACFCD should remove 160,000 cubic yards. After a suitable storage capacity is restored, sediment removal should be an ongoing maintenance tasks based on the amount that flows into the basin annually.
- **Go with the flow.** LACFCD should use natural stream flows through the dam to remove sediment from the reservoir to the extent possible. Large quantities of sediment have been removed in the past using this method. Using hydrology will not require heavy, noisy, air polluting diesel trucks on our already over-crowded freeways.
- **Let the habitat grow.** LACFCD proposes to leave a permanently denuded maintenance area of up to 120 acres after

their removal program, but Hahamongna is now home to some of the richest riparian and woodland habitat in Los Angeles County. A Slow Program will not require this permanent scar, creating only small areas of temporary biological disturbance.

- **Keep neighborhood impacts low.** The Slow Program can reduce the cataclysmic impacts of the LACFCD Big Dig, which will be hard on everyone in this region but especially on residents of West Pasadena. The Slow Program will reduce harmful air pollution levels, noise and traffic.

There is no dispute that something needs to be done to restore storage capacity at Devil’s Gate Dam., but the solution needs to be ongoing and sustainable, while reducing neighborhood impacts. The Devil’s Gate project should be the first of a new generation of sustainable flood management for Southern California. The Slow Program will ensure that it is.

City opposes County’s current sediment removal plan

The Pasadena City Council will tell Los Angeles County that “we’re not backing down” in opposition to the currently proposed sediment removal project in Hahamongna Watershed Park. Council, in December, voted to retain an expert consultant to support a special committee of experts, community members and City staff charged with developing an alternate plan that, from Pasadena’s point of view, would be preferred. Expressing a Council consensus, District 2 Councilmember Margaret McAustin noted that “There has to be ‘a’ project, it just can’t be this project.” Source: *Pasadena Now*.