

COSEE-West

*“Visioning Southern California Watersheds Through Time:
How Did We Get Here? Where Are We Now? And What Does the Future Hold?”*

Lecture, Dec 2, 2009

Misconceptions

“There’s no river in Los Angeles!”

Yes, there is! See below... ☺

“The Los Angeles River is entirely enclosed in concrete.”

Actually, it is not completely walled off. Yes, most of the Los Angeles River is a concrete channel, but not all of it. Almost 75% of the river’s 52 miles are enclosed in concrete, but Glendale Narrows (behind the Sepulveda Dam near Van Nuys, east of Griffith Park) and the last few miles in Long Beach have escaped that fate.

“Fish don’t/can’t live in the Los Angeles River.”

The L.A. River actually has lots of fish and other organisms living in it! Although, as far as we know, none of the fish are native species.

See the Friends of the Los Angeles River’s report on the State of the River.

<http://folar.org/fish-study-2008.pdf.zip>

In this study, eight species of fish, bullfrog tadpoles, and red swamp crayfish were all found living in the L.A. River. The eight species of fish found were the fathead minnow (*Pimephales promelas*), carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), black bullhead (*Ameiurus melas*), Amazon sailfin catfish (*Pteroplichthys pardalis*), mosquitofish (*Gambusia affinis*), green sunfish (*Lepomis cyanellus*), largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*), and tilapia (*Oreochromis* sp.).

“The Los Angeles River has always run more or less the same course as its current one.”

No, in fact, the Los Angeles River has changed course quite a bit over the years (before the concrete was constructed!). Sometimes after flooding events the river emptied into the Santa Monica Bay and sometimes into San Pedro Bay.

“All of the water in the Los Angeles River is rainwater or spring water.”

Actually, the Sepulveda Basin Treatment Facility discharges cleaned water into the river and urban runoff of water (or other things) into storm drains also ends up in the river.

“All the water in the Los Angeles River is freshwater.”

Because of the tidal influence, salty/brackish water can reach quite far up the L.A. River from the ocean.