

# Path to Revitalizing Ballona Creek

## Building on our strong foundation!

### Introduction

Ballona Creek connects us all. It has created community throughout history and can be an extraordinary resource for our future. Together, we can advance its revitalization and realize its potential as a multi-jurisdictional asset.

Once a natural stream, Ballona Creek (pronounced “Bah-yo-nuh”) attracted the Tongva People, the Machados, Camp Latham, Thomas Ince, Harry Culver, and countless others. Since 1935, it has been a concrete lined flood control channel, extending nine miles and draining approximately 130 square miles of the Los Angeles Basin. It runs through Culver City and features a paved Class I multi-use path along the northern bank from Syd Kronenthal Park to the Santa Monica Bay. The creek is a critical resource for flood control, water quality management, ecological restoration, active mobility, recreation, educational/arts programming, open space, and resilience.

### Taking action

Over the last couple of decades, public agencies, non-profits, businesses, and educational organizations have worked toward revitalizing the creek as both a water and recreational amenity.

In 2016, City Council adopted the [2016-2020 Strategic Plan](#) to respond to Culver City’s changing environment. One of the goals was to enhance the restoration and use of Ballona Creek and make it a more sustainable, walkable, bikeable and connected recreational attraction. This goal was carried into the current [2018-2023 Strategic Plan](#), with a focus on extending the bike path to improve mobility and provide greater access to the Metro Expo Line. Actions to fulfill this initiative include partnering with the City of LA, Metro, and the Baldwin Hills Conservancy to obtain an Environmental Impact Bond.

The [Ballona Creek Revitalization Project](#) aims to implement that goal and continue to build on successes, such as:

- **2019:** [Park to Playa - Ballona Creek Connection Project](#) completed a segment of the Park to Playa Trail – a planned 13-mile regional trail that will connect a network of trails, parks and open spaces from the Baldwin Hills to the Pacific Ocean
- **2019:** Ballona Creek Revitalization Project Task Force Meeting #2
- **2018:** [2018-2023 Strategic Plan](#), City Council renewed its commitment to revitalize the creek, improve multi-modal mobility, and identify funding opportunities
- **2018:** Mayor Thomas Small began exploring an Environmental Impact Bond (EIB) to fund an eastward extension of the creek’s multi-use path in partnership with the City of Los Angeles, LA Metro, US Army Corps of Engineers, and Los Angeles County Flood Control District
- **2018:** Public Works/Environmental Programs & Operations completed its first stormwater diversion project at its Transfer Station Facility located adjacent to the creek
- **2018:** City Council decided to include a focused Ballona Creek element in the upcoming [General Plan Update](#)
- **2018:** Ballona Creek Revitalization Project Task Force Meeting #1
- **2018:** CivicSpark Fellowship resulted in progress toward research, a revitalization strategy, and development of a creek-adjacent parcel atlas
- **2017:** Culver City adopted a [Polystyrene Ban Ordinance](#) to reduce the amount of polystyrene materials found in the creek



Source: Ballona Creek Greenway Plan, The Bay Foundation

- **2016:** Culver City residents approved [Measure CW](#), a parcel tax that funds stormwater projects within the City of Culver City to improve regional water quality
- **2016:** [Five-Year Strategic Plan, FY 2016-17 to 2020-21](#), City Council committed to revitalize the creek, improve multi-modal mobility, and identify funding opportunities
- **2011:** [Enhanced Watershed Management Program for the Ballona Creek Watershed](#), Ballona Creek Watershed Management Group
- **2011:** [Historical Ecology of the Ballona Creek Watershed](#), Southern California Coastal Water Research Project
- **2011:** [Park to Playa Trail Feasibility Study and Wayfinding Plan](#), Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority
- **2011:** [Ballona Creek Greenway Projects](#), The Bay Foundation
- **2010:** [Ballona Creek Greenway Plan](#), The Bay Foundation
- **2004:** [Ballona Creek and Trail Focused Special Study](#), City of Culver City
- **2003:** [Ballona Creek Trail and Bikeway Environmental and Recreational Enhancement Study](#), Baldwin Hills Conservancy

## A bit of history

Ballona Creek has a rich and varied history. For thousands of years, the [Tongva People](#) called the Ballona Creek Watershed home and were expertly adapted to the ebb and flow of regional water patterns. During the mid- to late-19th century, the creek attracted the [Machados](#), a Spanish family who built their home near the creek and laid claim to the area encompassing what would later become Culver City.

The creek also attracted other uses - from a Civil War army base in 1820 ([Camp Latham](#)) to a backdrop for western films produced by Thomas Ince in the early 1900s. Shortly thereafter, it became a key piece in Harry Culver's vision for a city where the movie industry could thrive. Throughout this time, the Ballona Creek Watershed supported 14,000 acres of wetlands and served as a surface hydrologic linkage between the [La Cienega and Ballona Lagoon complexes](#).

## CivicSpark Fellowship

The [Ballona Creek Revitalization Project](#) is supported by two [CivicSpark](#) Water Fellows. Administered by the Local Government Commission (LGC) in partnership with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR), CivicSpark is an AmeriCorps program that aims to build local capacity to respond to climate change. CivicSpark Fellows serve for 11 months and enjoy hands-on training related to a water project while the City benefits from added staffing resources. The City's first CivicSpark Fellows, [Jonathan Dolan and Jose Torres](#), served from September 2017-August 2018. A second round of Fellows, [Morgan Kaplan and Priya Macwan](#), are serving the City from September 2018-August 2019.

## Next steps

After the second Ballona Creek Revitalization Project Task Force meeting on January 16, 2019, City Council will consider how to move forward with an action strategy to implement revitalization projects along Ballona Creek. This strategy could identify short-, mid-, and long-term improvements including associated funding requirements, permitting, technical reviews, and multi-agency coordination.

Short-term improvements may include art installations, interpretive and wayfinding signage, lighting, homeless assistance, repaving, gate openings, safety patrols, and/or education campaigns. Mid- to long-term "audacious goal" improvements could include pocket parks, path extension, terracing/reconfiguration, water capture, and/or mobility hubs.

**For more information, visit:**

**[www.CulverCity.org/BallonaCreek](http://www.CulverCity.org/BallonaCreek)**